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## The Role of College Radio in the Music Industry: A Descriptive Study

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Suzanne Marie Holtermann entitled "The Role of College Radio in the Music Industry: A Descriptive Study." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication.

Barbara Moore, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School


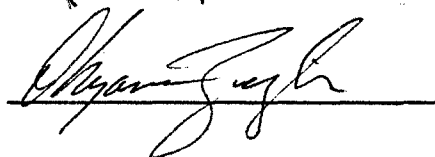
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Signature Suzanne Marie Kottermann

Date May 29, 1992

**THE ROLE OF COLLEGE RADIO IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY:  
A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Suzanne Marie Holtermann

August 1992

**DEDICATION**

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my parents

*Paul J. Holtermann*

and

*Barbara A. Holtermann*

who have given me invaluable educational opportunities.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my appreciation to all those who have contributed to this study and made its completion possible.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research was to describe the role of college radio in the music industry. The current environment surrounding the college radio scene was documented through interviews with nine record label executives and eight college music directors. The researcher also documented the historical relationship between the radio and recording industries and examined the ideological influences and the economic structures of the music business.

The study indicated that the counterculture phenomenon known as "alternative rock" has emerged from the underground into a legitimate commercial format. Alternative music is no longer the disregarded fringe of the music industry, but instead an aggressively marketed division of "popular" music. There are presently heavy promotional endeavors directed at college radio by the major labels in an attempt to increase the popularity of the alternative format. As a result, college radio has become a sub-industry of the corporate music culture.

The data gathered from the interviews revealed a high degree of divergence between major labels and independent labels, not only in their organizational structure, but in their philosophy and approach toward marketing music to college radio.

All the respondents included in this study acknowledged the domination of major labels over every aspect of the college radio industry. Several of the respondents indicated that major label



representatives are manipulating college music directors in their attempt to promote music to "Commercial Alternative" stations, where the potential for profit is greater.

The study indicated that charts have become institutionalized in the college radio circuit as the focal point in the promotion of the alternative format. The charts were viewed with a high degree of skepticism. All the music directors acknowledged that they felt pressure from major label representatives to add music to their rotation in an effort to gain chart position. The respondents interpreted the record companies' pursuit of chart position as exploitive.

Throughout the interviews the issue of integrity was raised. The interviews indicated that airplay decisions are influenced by factors other than the quality of the music and whether it is right for their station. The respondents observed that college playlists show little experimentation. They expressed concern that college music directors are taking fewer chances on innovative music.

The research revealed a trend toward the homogenization of college radio. The respondents concluded that the survival of college radio as an outlet for music innovation and free expression depends on the ability of college music directors to get back to the basic precept upon which college stations were founded: experimentation in music.

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## **COLLEGE RADIO**

*College Radio, you make me feel so different now and even though during the day you're a stock broker but at night we read french symbolist poetry.*

*Oh girl together we can change the world or at least the music industry. Alternative, progressive, the cutting edge.*

*And girl with you I feel so safe and liberal and you could never be a fascist I know College Radio you wouldn't lie to me and turn out to be a top forty station that's been bought by the major labels...?*

*Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. College Radio.*

**CONSOLIDATED**

**friendly fa\$cism**

**NETTWERK**

Lyrics reprinted with permission

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **RECORDS AND RADIO: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

#### **The Development of Mass Communications Media for Sound**

Since the beginning of commercial broadcasting in the 1920s, radio has had an enormous influence on the business and the profession of music. Programming patterns developed early in radio's history, and music played an extremely important role (Fink 1989).

In a few short years radio became an industry giant, at first dwarfing and later absorbing the record business (Fink 1989). These two industries formed the first mass communications media for sound. Music reached audiences of millions (Baskerville 1982). Radio delivered whole new audiences for folk music, country, blues and jazz. Mass media forever changed the size and composition of "the music audience," and merchants were quick to respond to the new millions of paying customers (Baskerville 1982).

Radio music became a vital part of everyday life as America became a music-conscious nation. Radio music embraced established artists, and created many new musical stars (DeLong 1980). These new stars in turn helped to popularize the medium of radio.

## **A Symbiotic Relationship**

The connection between music and broadcasting has always been an intimate one. The relationship between the two industries is generally described as symbiotic. Radio depends on record labels to supply programming. In addition, radio relies on the judgment of the record labels in signing and developing artists whom the public wants to hear (*Inside the Recording Industry* 1988).

Record companies seek radio's cooperation in playing established performers, and also in giving consistent and adequate airplay to newcomers (*Inside the Recording Industry* 1988). Record companies have found that the most successful means of promoting records is to get them broadcast on the radio (Baskerville 1982). It is difficult, without airplay, for consumers to become exposed to the abundance of music available. A consumer that is unaware of a product, cannot purchase it.

Exposure given recorded music by broadcast stations is the single most important element in the promotion of records (Baskerville 1982). Therefore, the goal of record companies is to get stations to play records. It is hoped listeners will like the music well enough to buy it.

Record sales are almost totally dependent on gaining airplay (Baskerville 1982). According to a survey by A.C. Nielsen in 1983, 63 percent of album purchases were influenced by radio exposure (Denisoff 1986). The more exposure a record company can obtain for its product over the radio, the greater the product's chances of

becoming a hit. Exposure via the medium of radio can "make" a song, record, or artist successful (Fink 1989).

Today there are hundreds of record companies which release countless numbers of records each week (Baskerville 1982). These records may never leave the warehouses unless they get broadcast (Baskerville 1982). In an effort to expose a record to the buying public through radio airplay, record promoters first target radio broadcasters and broadcast programmers (Fink 1989). Promotions departments of record companies try to "hook" program directors with their product. However, the large number of records and the competition between companies makes it difficult for one record to be distinguished from the others (Denisoff 1975).

### **The Role of Charts**

Hit records are the lifeblood of the commercial recording business. The industry's trade publications gather information from radio stations and retail outlets to determine which current releases are most popular with the listening audience (*Inside the Recording Industry* 1988). The trade publications use representative samples (reporting panels) from which they extrapolate a national picture.

Weekly charts serve a variety of purposes within the industry. Record companies use chart information to promote their releases to radio and retail outlets. Convincing a station to add a record on the basis of its national chart performance or regional airplay activity may, in turn, fuel the record's momentum the following week--if that

station reports to the trade publications (*Inside the Recording Industry* 1988).

Radio stations use the charts to help measure a record's national performance. Programmers factor chart information into playlist decisions, such as whether to add or drop a record, or increase or decrease its rotation (*Inside the Recording Industry* 1988).

Retailers and wholesalers use the charts to assist in buying decisions: whether to stock more of a release which appears to be gaining in popularity, or to curtail buying a title which may be slowing or losing ground (*Inside the Recording Industry* 1988).

### **Programming Trends in Radio**

The disc jockey reigned over airtime and became the arbiter of the economic success of recording companies and songwriters (Denisoff 1975). Sociologist Howard Jolly commented, "Disc jockeys, above all others, have the almost unique characteristic of participating in promotion and the 'sifting' process through which all records go-- which is to say that a disc jockey is a gatekeeper" (Denisoff 1975). Martin Block, considered to be the prototype disc jockey, stated: "Programs help popularize tunes" (Denisoff 1975).

The Top 40 format makes records popular faster than other programming formats because of the intensity of exposure by programming top hit songs. Top 40 radio was pioneered by Todd Storz. Storz developed the concept that people liked to hear the same records over and over. In Top 40 programming, the unique

feature is the rotation formula--the repetitive playing of the top ten or fifteen hits throughout the broadcast day with less frequent playing of other songs on the Top 40 list. With the quick spread of Top 40 in the 1950s, stations became willing promoters of records (Fink 1989).

However, Top 40 stations eventually reduced their playlists by 25 to 50 percent. The national average playlist of "contemporary" stations fell below thirty records (Baskerville 1982). Top 40 today is actually only Top 15 or 20 in some markets. As a result, it is harder to get records played on the radio (Wiessman 1979).

The reduction in the number of records being programmed limits stations to adding two to four new releases weekly. Compare those figures with the number of records released each week. Every seven days there are approximately one thousand new releases by record companies (Baskerville 1982). This limitation has an impact upon the whole music industry. As the number of "stiffs" (losses) produced yearly illustrates, most records fail. Record companies place much of the blame for record losses on the radio industry's preoccupation with numbers.

Since broadcasting is one of the dominant mediums for advertising, competition for advertising dollars has become intense. Advertisers rely on market research to make decisions. Radio stations actively engage in trying to determine what it is that the public wants to hear. Survival often depends on a station's ability to accurately count and diagnose the taste of its potential audience (Baskerville 1982).



Audience research is often based on demographic studies. Demography can be defined as the statistical science dealing with the distribution, density and vital statistics of populations (Baskerville 1982). Radio is a tremendously competitive business. The competition historically has been for higher numbers as measured in the Arbitron (ARB) ratings polls. On the basis of these numbers, advertising contracts are awarded or withheld, and profits and losses result. Failure to achieve adequately high numbers results in the cancellation of advertising, radio personalities, and formats (Denisoff 1986).

With the radio industry structured this way, the perceived interests of radio station program directors are antagonistic to those of the record companies. Bill Drake, co-founder of "Boss Radio," said: "The record companies' goal is to get their records played on the station. The station in turn wants to air only records that are established hits" (Denisoff 1986).

In the late sixties, FM radio became the dominant outlet for rock. The FM band was crucial in popularizing and commercializing progressive rock music (Denisoff 1986). Underground, progressive, or free-form radio was established in San Francisco on the number-one Top 40 station, KYA, during the midnight to dawn shift (Denisoff 1986).

Deejay Russ Syracuse violated nearly all the canons of Boss Radio by airing music not found on any chart. Syracuse tapped a reservoir of musical material ignored by the commercial stations: the long-playing

album. He was able to demonstrate that albums were no longer just one-hit singles with eleven fillers (Denisoff 1986).

The new format worked with college students, indicating that a youth audience existed that preferred musical fare other than the normal AM (Top 40) material. Both the rise of the LP and industry awareness of a youth culture led to the success of underground radio (Denisoff 1986).

The first FM "Free-form" station was KMPX in San Francisco. The programming format featured rock and roll, traditional folk and city blues, reggae, electronic music, and even some jazz and classical selections. Program director Tom Donahue believed "music should not be treated as a group of objects to be sorted out like eggs with each category kept apart from the others, and it is exciting to discover that there is a large audience that shares that premise" (Denisoff 1986).

### **The Discovery of a Marketable Commodity**

The success of KMPX resulted in other stations adopting the progressive format. After a four year rise in popularity, underground stations, also called "alternative" or "free-form," stabilized at about four hundred (*New York Times* 1972). These stations catered largely to people whom commercial stations ignored: those in the counterculture, political radicals, students and activist blacks. The stations were also identifiable by informal, low-pressure commercials

and sometimes by unusual programming and a general aura of "hipness" in style (*New York Times* 1972 ).

Underground radio liberalized playlists and allowed deejays to get away from strict formats (Denisoff 1986). For the record industry, the success of underground radio was refreshing. An entirely new avenue for the exposure and marketing of product had been opened. A Columbia Records executive said: "Thank God for underground FM stations because that's given an outlet for the artist who wouldn't be played on Top 40" (Denisoff 1986).

The FM stations built an audience of loyal listeners in three ways: by playing cuts unheard on AM; by talking with instead of to listeners; and by opening up the station to the community (Denisoff 1986). As the audience grew, the ratings climbed, and station owners suddenly had a marketable commodity (Fong-Torres 1970). Free-form formats immediately drew advertisers who had never before used radio. As it approached and surpassed AM radio audiences in many markets, FM radio began to play the rating game that created the Top 40 format on AM radio (Denisoff 1986).

The result was the demise of free-form radio. In a special review section in *Rolling Stone* on underground radio, Ben Fong-Torres (himself a Deejay) remarked:

The air is filled with increasingly uptight advertisers, administration takes over, and everything sterilized. Suddenly there are playlists and certain records have to be banned. Suddenly there's no 'community' out there but a share of the 'quarter hour' audience instead. It appears that underground radio under the regressive nursing of network

and/or corporate owners, is becoming just another spinoff of commercial, format radio. In short, underground radio is safe stuff nowadays, no more 'progressive.' FM stations are sounding scared. (Fong-Torres 1970)

Progressive rock stations narrowed programming and battled to get a broader share of the audience. They gave up much of the free-form deejay and programming style (Chapple and Garofalo 1978). The story of KMPX is typical of underground stations. It went from a bastion of the counterculture to a lucrative commercial property (Chapple and Garofalo 1978). A 1972 *New York Times* survey indicated that a considerable standardization of the progressive format had taken place. Pete Fornatale, an FM jock, wrote: "Progressive commercial radio in the United States is a myth. As long as broadcasting remains wed to financial concerns, the idea of a totally committed radio is absurd" (Denisoff 1986).

Paul Atkinson, senior vice president of A&R (artist and repertoire) at RCA, recognized progressive stations increasingly relying on research, demographics and advertising (Pond 1988). "Radio is interested not in breaking new artists, but in generating the maximum amount of advertising income. And the way they're going to do that is by playing the hits" (Pond 1988). Atkinson goes on to say, "Radio is so ratings driven that it tends to draw away and dry up the creative fringes. The mainstream is so important that the outer edges are just becoming a wasteland" (Pond 1988).

## **Ratings Cause Conflict**

The policy of advertising "targeting" was detrimental to the record industry. Miles Copeland, founder of the International Record Syndicate (IRS Records), noted, "Our business suffered greatly in the late 1970s because radio became rigidly formatted in a narrow spectrum, forcing record companies to sign acts only within that spectrum, creating a self-perpetuating system turning out clone group after clone group" (Kozak 1983).

Record companies suffered again in 1980 when Madison Avenue reviewed the census data. Advertisers saw that the U.S. population was aging, and decided to emphasize the over-25 market (Denisoff 1986). The result for broadcasters was significant. Top 40 singles stations with a hot rotation of fourteen to sixteen tunes were reprogrammed to stress "adult" fare. Advertisers' commercial time buys, the "mother's milk" of electronic media, legitimized the targeting of older audiences (Denisoff 1986).

The objectives of radio broadcasters and record companies conflicted: advertisers urged radio stations to pursue audiences who were not actively engaged in the purchasing of records, though their overall patterns of consumption made them attractive (Straw 1988). For the record companies, the paths music stations chose were imperative. Making records outside the medium's dominant formats would create predictable losses (Denisoff 1986).

By the early eighties, radio stations were dominated by "Adult Contemporary" (light pop) and country music formats, neither of

which had significant reach among those most involved in buying records (Straw 1988). At the same time, those stations directed at the core of record-buyers (those in their late teens and early twenties) were increasingly playing music which was neither contemporary nor on the charts (the "classic" album rock of the previous decade). Therefore, these stations did not contribute to the innovation or turnover of performers, styles and individual records (Straw 1988).

### **Radio Plays It Safe**

The trend of conservatism in pop radio threatened the recording industry. When radio reduces playlists, the record companies limit production because they are fearful of releasing an album with no avenue of exposure. Arista Records president Clive Davis pinpointed radio, particularly Album Oriented and Contemporary Hits Radio (formerly Top 40), as the principal culprit (Sutherland 1986). According to Davis, a cautious posture among major labels is linked to a "pattern of conservatism, sterilization, and market research" at radio (Sutherland 1986). The result is a "play it safe" mentality in pop radio that has "disenfranchised large and vital areas of modern music through arbitrary and narrow decisions about what listeners will and will not accept" (*Variety* 1984).

In the article, "What's Wrong With Radio," Steve Pond pointed out that the numbers (ratings) and the people who disseminate those numbers make radio conservative (Pond 1988). Because advertisers rely so heavily on research, radio is leaning on research more heavily.

NBC/The Source's Frank Cody described this reliance on proven methods as the medium's move to mass appeal. Cody stressed, "Whenever the dollar is attached to art, risk and creativity are diminished" (*Billboard* 1985).

For example, Pond said, "Programmers choose the songs their numbers say will hold up." Dave Moore, who operates Golden Oldies Radio in Tucson, Arizona, added that many programmers are tailoring top ten lists to influence ratings, ignoring the basic interests of their listeners. According to Moore, "Only the most naive believe the current top ten really represent the most popular songs" (Moore 1987).

President of A&M Records, Gil Friesen, asserted that program directors "have unwittingly and unknowingly stifled the exposure of a lot of wonderful rock and roll because they select only songs that appear to them to be safe, sure-fire, predictable hits." He further added, "When the guys who program stations do it by looking at their numbers, it forces artists, producers and record companies to concentrate on hit singles, which is not good for anyone artistically" (Pond 1988).

J.B. Griffith, senior editor at Tower Record's *Pulse!* and columnist for *Spin Magazine*, believes there is a large segment of the market that is still passionate about rock and roll, but their needs are not being met by album rock stations. According to Griffith, "This audience craves new, fresh, interesting rock music, the kind radio used to play before consultants stepped in and remade radio in their

image. This audience wants to hear new music, but has no desire to suffer through ten pop metal acts and a vintage Lynard Skynard cut to hear one song by the dB's" (Griffith 1988).

Furthermore, Griffith claimed: "There's so much great product out there being ignored. These records were never added to album rock playlists, and they were never played." Miles Copeland suggested that radio should take a bolder, more innovative role in the nurturing of new music: "Radio should not be a follower medium, it should be leading the audience. If people are not exposed to new things they won't know any better" (Gold 1983).

### **College Radio Gains Recognition**

The health of the record industry depends on the talent it can find, develop, and promote to the public. If a majority of record buyers start to become bored with recycled formulas, they will spend their disposable dollars on something else. Recognizing this, the labels began to place more emphasis on developing innovative bands that received airplay primarily on college radio stations (*Billboard* 1988).

The stereotypical view of the college student is one who is open to experimentalism, in life as well as in art. The popular belief is that college students tilt toward music by the more alternative bands who are never played on mainstream radio (Zimmerman 1989). This, combined with tighter commercial playlists, forced record labels to take a closer look at college radio.



College radio's increasing importance as an outlet for breaking new music is evidenced in record labels' interest in college radio as a marketing tool. Jerry Jaffe, Vice President of the rock department of Polygram, said that college stations have "perceived a void in commercial radio that appeals to their open-minded constituency and which they're actively exploiting" (Hall 1982). He stated that "labels with an investment in propagating new music have gone to bed with them" (Hall 1982).

The college radio scene serves an important role in exposing certain music styles to responsive audiences and strengthening retail sales of music it provides airplay. Michael Plen, national director of promotion for IRS Records, stated that college outlets are "still the number one aspect of the business that breaks new music" (Sacks 1983).

Although college radio can't pull the numbers of a commercial station, it can attract attention or get the ball rolling. "It's impossible for a record to go gold (sales of 500,000) on college airplay, but it does sell records," said CBS' Barry Levine (Pond 1983). Steve Tipp, Warner Bros. national promotion manager for modern music and college radio, agreed: "There's no doubt in my mind that college radio sells records" (Wykoff 1987).

## **RECORD LABELS AND COLLEGE RADIO**

### **Definition: Majors and Independents**

Record companies differ in their approach to record making and selling. There exist discernible characteristics which help to define the status of each company. Thus, the designations of "majors" and "independents" are in common usage in the record business.

The majors are the larger and most stable record companies. They have their own distribution systems and pressing plants, and enjoy high sales volume. The large, self-distributed record companies account for most of the industry's business (*Inside the Recording Industry* 1988).

The independent labels ("indies") are generally smaller in size, have to depend on others for the pressing of records, national distribution, and at times marketing (*Inside the Recording Industry* 1988). Some are known as "specialty" labels because they concentrate on a given genre. These labels usually have limited resources and a small roster of artists.

Generally, majority tastes were defined and catered to by the major record manufacturers, while the minority and esoteric cultural groups were dependent upon independent and specialty labels (Denisoff 1986). Small independents are often able to respond quickly to the rapidly changing tastes of the market. Due to their diminutive size and iconoclastic spirit, they have been successful in

breaking new ground in new, non-mainstream music styles.

Consequently, their initiatives frequently point the way for later successes by the majors (*Inside the Recording Industry* 1988).

The small independent labels were formed out of frustration with the music industry's lack of interest in punk and new wave (Goldberg 1982). Major labels focused on music geared toward Top 40 audiences, while ignoring the radical challenges of punk-rock and rap.

As a result, dozens of independent companies sprung up across the country to form the "other record business" (Goldberg 1982). Such labels provided evidence of musical alternatives to the least common denominators that paced the big leagues (Sutherland 1982).

### **The Rise of "Alternative" Marketing**

The lifeblood of the music industry rests in its ability to change and to discover new talent. For the past forty years, independent labels have been on the "cutting edge" of this endeavor (Pasternack 1987). The big record companies weren't interested in picking up any of the progressive bands that the smaller labels courted. The majors believed such bands were financial liabilities because commercial radio wouldn't play the new music (Goldberg 1982).

Most of the releases on small labels don't get airplay on commercial radio--the medium used by the majors to break most acts. Because of that, the small labels concentrated on reaching the grass-roots audience by way of dance clubs, the alternative press and college

radio (Goldberg 1982). The airplay came from college or public radio stations that placed less importance on ratings and advertising revenue than commercial stations.

For much of the 1980s the small labels that appeared in the wake of punk became a commercial minor league. With low overhead and modest break even points, the independents grew into an alternative music business (Pareles 1990). These small labels were left mostly to their own devices until a band became too popular to ignore. At that point, a major label would offer more money and wider distribution and carry off the talent (Pareles 1990). Belatedly convinced that the independent fringe had something they needed, the major labels began to snap up bands from the commercial stratum previously served by independent labels (Pareles 1990).

An ever increasing need to address the "cutting edge" audience for new artists and the perceived reluctance of album rock radio to play developing acts spurred major labels to focus increased attention on alternative marketing (Morris 1988). Major labels such as Columbia, Atlantic, Warner Brothers, Arista, Elektra, A&M, and Capital established alternative-marketing departments or their functional equivalents. One of the major challenges for these departments is developing consistent and coordinated national activity for their records (Morris 1988).

While the formal organization and staff strength of alternative divisions varied from label to label, the intent remained the same everywhere: to break artists whose music might encounter initial

resistance from conservative radio programmers (Morris 1988). Label executives noted that by generating alternative airplay and sales action for these acts, their companies can induce commercial radio stations to add their records (Morris 1988).

Ten years ago, college stations were virtually ignored by the major labels. During the past decade, major labels have increasingly recognized college radio as a crucial promotional target and an important vehicle for breaking new bands into the mainstream (Greene 1989). Strong sales by such acts lead to gold records, which illustrate that this crossover can provide a commercial pay-off (DiMartino 1988).

With evidence showing that college airplay has a substantial impact on record sales, the labels are devoting great resources to persuading student staffers that their records deserve to be played (Greene 1989). The growing importance of such marketing methods is reflected in the chart successes of major label acts.

By the late 1980s the independent labels were critical of the majors. According to the independents, among the problems caused by the majors' infiltration of the grass-roots market were the dominance of major-label acts on progressive radio charts; the flooding of the market with alternative product; stylistic compromises made by artists signed to major labels; the lower priority given by majors to independents they market and/or distribute; and the erosion of independent catalogs as majors sign artists early in their careers (McDonnell 1989).

Independent labels once held a lot of weight at most college stations. However, the growing importance of college and alternative radio in breaking new artists is increasingly reflected by major label efforts to maximize such exposure (McDonnell 1989). According to Nan Fisher, national alternative/college director at MCA, "We wind up going against a lot of the indie labels that do have younger, hipper, louder, certainly less commercial bands. But we have the money, the muscle, and the power" (DiMartino and Olson 1988).

The industry's increased involvement with college radio has had an undeniable impact. Although college-oriented tip sheets like *College Music Journal*, *New Music Report*, the *Gavin Report's Alternative Action*, and *Rockpool* have reported on the scene for a number of years, the major industry trades--*Billboard*, *Radio & Records*, *Hits*, *Album Network*, the *Hard Report*--have only recently begun carrying alternative charts. Such charts offer organized quantitative data with a national focus, which enable the labels to gauge how well they are faring in the new competitive market. The result is that record companies have increased confidence in the importance of college airplay.

The current level of record company involvement in college radio is "a whole new world" according to Will Botwin, who co-founded Side One Marketing as an independent college radio promotion firm (DiMauro 1984). Promotional record servicing of college radio is now at an all-time high. The result is that bands from major labels have gradually come to dominate the college radio charts, a traditional

independent label domain. This has led to a sameness in playlists in what is generally thought to be the airwaves' most creative area (McDonnell 1989).

College stations have influenced the pop mainstream. College radio brings left field acts into center field, and is therefore seen as a springboard to commercial airplay (Haber 1987). Lately, commercial radio has begun to sound more like college radio. The format that college radio began has been adopted by the commercial mainstream, as new music sales have grown and as stations like KROQ have sprung up (Pond 1983). KROQ pioneered the "Rock of the Eighties" format focusing on new music.

An increasing number of commercial stations are capitalizing on New Music formats. But with the commercial upswing of new music, college stations are at a crossroads: do they keep on playing the same music and risk duplicating commercial radio, or do they move toward more obscure programming?

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **THEORETICAL ASPECTS AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURES OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY**

At the heart of the frenetic activity of the record industry and of all the conflicting opinion to which this activity gives rise, lies a common goal: popular success (Hennion 1983). In order to attain this goal one must understand the relationship between that area of the cultural formation known as "popular music" and the ideological and economic structures which enable it to exist in modern society.

The key word in the music business is "popular." This chapter analyzes the various aspects of popular music and popular culture, as well as the industries through which it is promoted and marketed.

#### **Definition of Popular Music**

In his book, *Tarnished Gold: The Record Industry Revisited*, Serge Denisoff provided a definition for popular music. According to Denisoff, popular music is not typified by any generic style, nor is it the sum total of all musical styles. It does not include all forms of music. If it reflected all people's tastes, it would then have to include a multitude of styles and all of the esoteric genres enjoyed by



hundreds of taste publics (Denisoff 1986). Instead, Denisoff asserted popular music is not beamed at all of the public but at a self-selected audience that elects what is called "popular" with its listening time and dollars.

Quantitatively, popular music is a recognized product. The number of records sold is measurable and observable. Thus, popular music consists of whichever musical style sells enough to be deemed successful or representative of an exoteric audience. Success is determined by such indices of the music industry as radio play and over-the-counter sales (Denisoff 1986). People select what they like from what they hear. The reasons for this selection are influenced by many factors, some of which have little to do with the aesthetic quality of the song.

### **Audience Characteristics**

Popular music is supported by a majority of record buyers. Denisoff described this exoteric unit as large and highly unstable both in taste and artistic personnel. Because popular music is exoteric, the producer of popular music must address a generally amorphous, fluid, heterogeneous, and unpredictable collectivity of people (Denisoff 1986).

By its nature, college radio appeals not to an exoteric audience, but to an esoteric audience. The esoteric unit customarily is small, stable, and relatively homogeneous. Characteristic of esoteric genres is the homogeneity of consumers and their loyalty to specific artists and

styles (Denisoff 1986). Denisoff pointed out that esoteric taste groups are too small to go gold or platinum without moving into larger markets.

The larger the esoteric public, the less stability and predictability and the more chance of its tastes entering into the exoteric world of popular music (Denisoff 1986). An esoteric genre that enters the popular music arena must satisfy the demands of an exoteric audience while remaining unique to its original supporters. Its failure to accomplish the latter may lose it its supporters (Denisoff 1986).

Although it is a minority or small portion of the total music audience, an esoteric taste unit is in fact a "fashion feeder"; it attempts to preserve its genre while remaining part of the crazy-quilt pattern of popular music (Denisoff 1986). Not only does popular music feed from and contain specialty esoteric genres, but such genres have an existence independent of popular music (Denisoff 1986).

Denisoff suggested that the existence of diverse genres and taste cultures makes popular music unpredictable, for every record must be directed toward a taste culture sufficiently large to promise a profit on the record. These taste publics and genres are affected by a number of factors: age, sex, accessibility, race, class and education. These factors help determine esoteric and exoteric taste groups and establish the individual's relationship to popular music (Denisoff 1986).

Post World War II social scientist David Riesman explored the relationship of radio to adolescents. Riesman's journal article, entitled "Listening to Popular Music," indicated that popular music was a monopoly industry that handed down material to the young, who accepted it without question. He dichotomized the teenage audience on the basis of majority and minority taste units (Riesman 1957). Riesman characterized the majority as an amorphous unit with uncertain tastes that reflected peer-group pressures. This group typified what Riesman termed the conformist, "other-directed personality":

Most of the teenagers in the majority category have an indiscriminating taste in popular music: they seldom express articulate preferences. They form the audience for the larger radio stations, the "name" brands, the star singers, the *Hit Parade*, and so forth. The functions of music for this group are social--the music gives them something to talk or kid about with friends--coupled with a lack of concern about how hits are actually made; an opportunity for identification with star singers or band leaders as "personalities" with little interest in or understanding of the technologies of performance or of the radio medium itself. (Riesman 1957)

Riesman's delineation of the minority group is small, comprising more involved listeners "who are less interested in melody or tune than in arrangement or technical virtuosity." Riesman considered this an esoteric group. A key to the recognition of this minority group was its dissent from mass-produced culture:

The rebelliousness of this group might be indicated in some of the following attitudes toward popular music: an insistence on rigorous uncommercialized, unadvertised small bands rather than name bands; the development of a private language and

then a flight from it when the private language is taken over by the majority group; a profound resentment of the commercialization of radio and musicians. (Riesman 1957)

### **Characteristics of Popular Culture**

In his article, "A Theory of Mass Culture," Dwight Macdonald described mass culture as "manufactured wholesale for the market" (Macdonald 1988). Although it is sometimes called "Popular Culture," Macdonald determined "Mass Culture" a more accurate term, since its distinctive mark is that it is solely and directly an article for mass consumption, like chewing gum (Macdonald 1988).

The fact that business enterprise found a profitable market in the cultural demands of the newly awakened masses was among the reasons Macdonald listed for the growth of mass culture. Furthermore, the advance of technology made possible the cheap production of books, periodicals, and music in sufficient quantities to satisfy this market (Macdonald 1988).

According to Macdonald, mass culture is imposed from above. It is fabricated by technicians hired by businessmen; its audiences are passive consumers whose participation is limited to the choice between buying and not buying (Macdonald 1988). Macdonald referred to Clement Greenberg's use of the term "kitch" (the German term for popular, commercial art and literature) to describe mass culture. Furthermore, Macdonald claimed the "Lords of kitch" exploit the cultural needs of the masses in order to make a profit (Macdonald 1988).

According to Macdonald, the problem is acute in the United states not just because a prolific mass culture exists here. "Good art competes with kitch, serious ideas compete with commercialized formulae, and the advantage lies all on one side" (Macdonald 1988).

Clement Greenberg's article "Avant Garde and Kitch" defined the characteristics of kitch as mechanical and operated by formulas. He further described kitch as vicarious experience and faked sensations, which change according to style, but always remain the same (Greenberg 1988). Greenberg claimed, "Kitch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times. Kitch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money--not even their time" (Greenberg 1988).

Because it can be turned out mechanically, Greenberg asserted, kitch has been capitalized at a tremendous investment which must show commensurate returns. It is compelled to extend as well as to keep its markets (Greenberg 1988). Kitch's enormous profits are a source of temptation to the avant-garde itself, and its members have not always resisted this temptation. Writers and authors will modify their work under the pressure of kitch, if they do not succumb to it entirely. The result, according to Greenberg, is "the new is looted for new 'twists,' which are then watered down and served up as kitch" (Greenberg 1988).

In the article "Homogenization of Culture in Capitalist Society," Howard Koval concludes that [capitalist] culture consists of repetition. Koval analyzes the work of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno,

"Dialectics of Enlightenment" in which they posit general qualities which characterize mass culture in a capitalist society. Central to their argument is a tendency towards homogenization which "has made the technology of the culture industry no more than the achievement of standardization and mass production" (Koval 1988). Horkheimer and Adorno argue that there is less variety in cultural forms available to people. Rather than new ideas, messages, and values being manifested in cultural expressions like art and music, there is a systematic reduction in the number of new ideas introduced (Koval 1988).

Koval conducted a study based on the number and duration of hits listed on Billboard Hot 100 charts to test Adorno and Horkheimer's hypothesis. The evidence clearly demonstrated the declining number of songs reaching the public since 1965 and the increasing dominance of the biggest hits, both in terms of popularity and their monopoly over sales and air time (Koval 1988). Koval thus confirmed a tendency for the adoption of the industry strategy of marketing and selling a restricted number of product to a bigger audience. Koval suggested that such a development could have important implications for cultural choice in the future.

### **Popular Music as a Business**

In the article "Capitalism and Romantic Ideology in the Record Business," Jon Stratton distinguished two aspects of the popular music business which allow it to be called a culture industry: the large

corporate nature of the industry and the very high output of product (Stratton 1983).

According to Stratton, in the music industry, perhaps more than any other capitalist cultural industry, the ideology of a free market where consumers have limitless choices is taken to an extreme. Not only are the record companies themselves in competition, but each major company issues a number of records at the same time, many of which are aimed at the same consumer groups (Stratton 1983). Thus, in their attempts to market commercially successful records, the companies are often competing against each other and also within themselves, even within one label of one company (Stratton 1983).

Stratton asserted that because so few records make money, the companies feel forced to issue a large number of records in the hope that they will produce the few hits that will finance the release of the others, and ensure the company's ability to issue more records. (Stratton 1983).

Reebee Garofalo's article, "How Autonomous is Relative: Popular Music, the Social Formation and Cultural Struggle," examined the crucial role of the production, marketing, promotion and distribution prerogatives of the recording industry. According to Garofalo, record companies are clearly motivated by profit. Because the record market is one that is more difficult to control than the market for more utilitarian goods, maximizing the profits on the records that do sell necessarily leads to the tendency to saturate the marketplace with a limited range of product which has proved itself. Minimizing the

losses on those records that don't make a profit means that a wide range of music never comes to the attention of a mass public (Garofalo 1987).

To determine the meaning of production versus consumption, Garofalo referred to the classical reading of Marx. Accordingly, society is comprised of the economic base and the superstructure. The capitalist mode of production is seen as having certain internal class contradictions, such as the relationship between exploitation and profit (Garofalo 1987).

Garofalo's interpretation suggests that the superstructure (the realm of culture and ideology) is seen as being determined by the base. That is, the superstructure simply "reflects" those values and beliefs which are favorable to the ruling class, and which therefore support the status quo (Garofalo 1987).

Garofalo further asserted that the cultural products which would achieve the greatest commercial success would naturally tend to be those which challenge the status quo the least, those which aspire to the lowest common denominator of acceptability. In this view, understanding the political economy of the music business is essential for an understanding of popular music. According to Garofalo, there is a rough correspondence between the "commercialization" of popular music and its "cooptation" (Garofalo 1987).



## **The Promotion of Popular Music**

Perhaps the most potent force driving production in popular culture today is the constant tension between the bureaucratic need for rationality and control, and the need for novelty and innovation in product (Lewis 1986). This assertion was made by George H. Lewis in his article "Uncertain Truths: The Promotion of Popular Culture."

According to Lewis, popular culture industries are organized along traditionally bureaucratic lines that should maximize rational planning and decision-making. This bureaucratic organization should allow culture to be mass produced as a best-selling product, but it often does not work that way. The reason for this, is uncertainty: to a surprising extent, those in the culture industries have little concept of what ideas to buy and turn into product, or which product that they make will sell in the marketplace (Lewis 1986).

Lewis stated that an important implication of this system lies in the need for cultural industries to influence the ideas of the independent opinion leaders of the media, who stand between the industry and the mass audience. It is the positive judgment of these gatekeepers that allows the small percentage of all produced cultural material to flow through to the potential consumer (Lewis 1986).

Paul Hirsch studied the filtering process by which records are preselected for public consumption. He revealed his findings in his book, *The Structure of The Popular Music Industry*. Hirsch described the popular music industry as one whose members are involved in the

production and marketing of what are broadly defined as "cultural" items. According to Hirsch, the record and radio industries have grown up together and live in a symbiotic relationship. Each plays an important role in the dissemination and popularization of culture; both have affected its form and its direction. Though mutually dependent organizations, their goals vary and often conflict (Hirsch 1970).

According to Hirsch, the pressures upon the broadcaster are carefully considered by the record promoter in his attempts to aid and exploit him. The line between cooperation with and exploitation of radio programmers is a thin one for the promoter (Hirsch 1970). In all his dealings with radio programmers, the promoter's ultimate goal is to obtain airplay. For the help he provides the programmer, he expects him to reciprocate with airplay. This expectation need not be made explicit every time a favor is performed (Hirsch 1970).

In an interview conducted by Hirsch, a program director revealed, "The game of the promoter is to get you obligated, be it through exclusives, dinners, theater tickets, or what have you." This statement, made by one of the program directors interviewed, was repeated almost verbatim by each of the others as well (Hirsch 1970).

Hirsch makes the assertion that many promoters have come to rely on the institution of the "hype" in their effort to force the airplay of records. Hype is a term used in all sectors of the preselection system to refer to any illegitimate means employed by record companies or their agents to induce the airplay of a record. By analogy, the "hype" serves to artificially boost a record's sales (Hirsch

1970). According to Hirsch, that the hype is used at all indicates that legitimate channels are overloaded. Since this is so often the case, the hype has become institutionalized.

In their book, *Rock 'n' Roll Is Here to Pay*, Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo described the promotional infrastructure to the main business of selling records. Since the record company has control over what kind of music will be produced, it fundamentally determines what will be heard on radio. Radio, television, and personal appearances are tools used by record companies to sell records (Chapple and Garofalo 1978).

As practiced by the major companies in the forties and early fifties, promotion was simplistic. The majors did not get involved in an aggressive way with promotion, especially radio promotion, until they were forced to by the initiatives of the independents in the early fifties (Chapple and Garofalo 1978). In the sixties, as FM radio quickly spread to the major cities throughout the country, record companies discovered that short radio ads played over new music created quick sales. Radio soon outdistanced print in promotional importance.

Promotion has changed as musical tastes have changed. Promotional departments are naturally set up to sell the type of record that is most popular (Chapple and Garofalo 1978). Chapple and Garofalo asserted that some companies seem to believe that popular music runs in trends that can be consciously created and exploited by record companies. Companies can certainly popularize a type of

music by heavy promotion and subsidized exposure (Chapple and Garofalo 1978).

### **A New Pop Mainstream**

In his analysis of popular music and post modernism, Will Straw provided an account of important changes within the music related industries which contribute to a new pop mainstream. Straw described the objective of major record companies in the late seventies as that of "marrying the high rate of turnover and low production costs of disco records with the career stability and longevity of white album rock." According to Straw, this would require a musical field in which feedback mechanisms (between airplay and retail sales, for example) were quick, but in which performer identities were distinct and marketable.

Straw noted that musical styles and periods within the history of pop may be distinguished according to the quantity and forms of information which surround the playing and consumption of music. In periods of a high rate of turnover, information about the position of records relative to each other according to some measure of popularity generally is widely disseminated and monitored, and published sales charts and other means for monitoring relative success and marking change attract a high level of public interest (Straw 1988).

In the mid eighties the selection of a single from an album as the focus of promotion acquired an importance which it had not had

since the early seventies. There was even the return in many cases (usually of so-called new music groups) to the release of singles before albums. The single-song became the crucial factor in the marketing of an album (Straw 1988).

One of the positive aspects about non-commercial radio is the pluralism (playing several songs) per album; one single cut isn't repeated, as in the Top 40 format (Long 1989). Brian Long, Assistant Editor and Independent Label Director of *Rockpool*, provided a provocative guest editorial for *College Broadcaster*. According to Long, college radio is in danger of becoming what it once was an alternative to: a dinosaur--like commercial radio.

Long claimed the new music format took shape in the late seventies with the beginning of the alternative music trade magazines. These magazines created a perceptible structure to the seemingly free-form medium by establishing radio charts. The charts provided a means to determine how popular a record was. Something tangible could be given as proof that a record was doing well (Long 1989).

Today, college charts themselves have become an institution and the influence of charts is profound (Long 1989). *Billboard* and *Radio & Records* have joined the alternative rock fray by allowing certain college stations to report their playlists. Because these magazines only accept reports on the most-played songs, "mass-conforming consensus" on a certain track must be made before a record can chart (Long 1989). As companies vie for position on these charts, they start

emphasizing certain tracks. The result, asserted Long, is the homogenization of college radio.

Ten years ago, predictions of college radio's future did not include a trend toward its homogenization. In fact, today's college radio barely resembles the early stations which began broadcasting from campuses.

In his book, *The College Radio Handbook*, Billy G. Brant described college radio as it existed in 1980. He listed three basic purposes which were considered to be the cornerstones of college radio broadcasting: To provide educational or instructional material for use by schools; to train future broadcasters and; to provide the listener with an entertainment and informational service (Brant 1981).

Although these principles may still exist at some stations today, they are overshadowed by the music industry's hype surrounding college radio. When Brant investigated college radio, there was little interaction between college stations and record companies. He noted that most record companies sent promotional copies of records, but service was provided after a written request from the stations and was often irregular and unreliable (Brant 1981).

College radio has changed a great deal since Brant wrote *The College Radio Handbook*. However, some things have remained the same. College stations hold noncommercial licenses. Brant noted that noncommercial broadcasting eliminates pressure from advertisers for certain kinds of programs or for larger shares of the

audience. This lack of pressure is credited with the stimulation of creative programming (Brant 1981). According to Brant, noncommercial broadcasting attempts to serve the public interest by providing an "alternative service." The whole purpose is to give listeners a choice (Brant 1981).

In summary, the literature suggests that the goal of companies within the music industry is to achieve the popular success of its product. Because popular success is possible only with the support of the masses, record companies have formulated a systematic approach to the marketing and promotion of music to the masses.

Innovation is sacrificed in the production of popular culture. This is cause for alarm as the music industry sets its sights on the promotion of music at the college radio level.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **EXPLANATION OF THE STUDY**

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

College radio evolved from an autonomous, underground medium that was run in a free-form style by college students, into a streamlined operation that caters more and more to major label product (*College Broadcaster* 1989). The implications of these developments is the cause of a vigorous dialogue within the broadcasting and recording communities.

When major labels discovered the profit potential at the college radio level, they started a "veritable mill of promotional pressure" directed at college programmers (Schmidt 1992). These labels exert unusual power on college radio, whose music directors are often impressionable teenagers wanting to play what's "in" (*College Broadcaster* 1989). The barrage of promotional efforts focused on college stations is much more intense than ever before (Norberg 1992). This pressure from the labels jeopardizes college radio musical freedom.

Increased attention by record companies has led some station programmers to rely on trade magazines and record promoters for information about what they should be playing. Over-reliance on certain



material has led to a sameness in playlists in what is generally thought to be the airwaves' most creative area.

This trend in college radio programming has had a detrimental impact on independent labels, whose music once dominated college airplay. Without airplay on college stations, independent labels will have no avenue of exposure for their music.

Non-mainstreamers believe that alternative music means not worrying about sales charts, radio play and all the other forces of the billion-dollar industry. Because college radio advocates believe they have an obligation to be an alternative, an attempt to mainstream college radio may backfire. But while college radio is really the only place for truly 'new' music to be heard, doubts exist as to whether even the alternative scene can escape commercialism. Those loyal to the esoteric precepts upon which college radio was established see the major label interest in college radio as exploitive.

As educational, non-commercial stations, college radio has been shielded from the exploitive nature of the business. However, more and more emphasis is being placed on their ability to break the barriers of commercial radio. As Garofalo suggested, products which achieve commercial success tend to aspire to the lowest common denominator (Garofalo 1987). Thus, college radio's creativity may be lost as a result of manipulation by record companies whose goal is to crossover their songs to commercial playlists.

If record companies are successful in such crossover attempts, college radio could lose its programming edge and sound more like

commercial Top 40 radio. As a result, a unique audience whose needs are not met by commercial radio, will no longer be catered to. Instead of filling the void left by commercial radio, college radio may be adding to it.

Little scholarly research has been conducted that examines the implications of this development. The researcher has found no systematic academic research concerning the relationship between college radio music directors and recording industry executives, or concerning either of their attitudes toward the present environment surrounding college radio.

Thus this study attempted to document the attitudes of selected major and independent label executives, as well as college radio music directors toward the present environment surrounding college radio and the music industry.

### ***SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY***

Popular literature concerning college radio is scarce, except in times of increased activity surrounding the industry. In the early seventies, college radio was in the spotlight as a viable force in selling product. However, preoccupation with commercial outlets soon overshadowed the potential of college outlets. After a decade, recognition of college radio returned to the forefront.

This study will provide insight into college radio's present and future role in the music industry. College station program and music directors are faced with important decisions regarding programming.

This research may provide information on those things that influence their decisions, and also possible implications of those decisions. For example, trends in future radio programming may be revealed.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive study is designed to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of study. One method of documenting the current conditions or attitudes surrounding college radio is by interview. There are several advantages to the interview methodology. First, large amounts of data can be collected from a variety of people (Wimmer and Dominick 1991). It is also the most flexible means of obtaining information. Interviews allow freedom for questioning in depth, as well as answering in detail.

Using this method, the interviewer is able to restructure or clarify questions, probe subjects, and follow up on unclear responses. It is most appropriate for use when it is necessary to ask questions that cannot be structured effectively into a multiple-choice format. This flexibility enables the interviewer to gather information about the respondents' feelings and the motives behind their answers (Wimmer and Dominick 1991).

Unfortunately, there exist limitations to this research design. The major problem with this approach is the inability to generalize the results. A second disadvantage is that inappropriate wording and placement of questions can result in interviewer bias (Wimmer and

Dominick 1991). The method is also vulnerable to poor sample characteristics. However, interviews may suggest hypotheses that can be tested using another method of research.

For purposes of this study, interviews provided the best means for taking a firsthand look at those who actually work in college radio, and in the recording industry which services them. In-depth interviews with music directors of college stations, as well as record label executives, were the focus of this study. Seventeen interviews were conducted.

Although interviewees were scattered across the country, the researcher was able to conduct interviews in person with six of the respondents. The personal interviews were recorded with the permission of the respondent to ensure accuracy. The remaining interviews were conducted by telephone, and were recorded with the permission of the interviewee.

Interviews were conducted with record label executives who are closely related to the alternative/college marketing functions of the industry. Until recently, college/alternative marketing has been the exclusive domain of independent labels. In order to include this important development in the overall analysis, interviews were conducted with representatives of major labels, as well as with large scale independent (sometimes referred to as major-independents) and small scale independent labels.

Nine label executives were interviewed, including three from each of the categories of labels mentioned above. The basis of selection of label executives was somewhat arbitrary: it was founded upon

recommendations from industry insiders, as well as information from record company directories.

In order to provide a two dimensional perspective of the current conditions surrounding the college radio industry, interviews were conducted with eight music directors of college radio stations. In choosing the music directors, the researcher analyzed college stations' playlists printed in the *College Music Journal*. The basis of comparison was diversity in programming. Stations which revealed a tendency toward major label product were compared to stations which revealed a tendency toward individualized programming. The intention of the researcher was to discover possible cause and effect relationships leading to programming decisions.

The President of The Intercollegiate Broadcasting System was interviewed in an effort to determine which stations could best be generalized to the college radio industry. The researcher also consulted Bennett Smith, who is presently employed as an independent promoter for The Judy Bats (a band on Sire label). Mr. Smith contacts college stations around the country, and provided valuable information regarding which stations might provide a representative sample of current attitudes in college radio.

In an effort to determine differentiation in record service, the size (wattage) and the market were considered in the selection process. All of the stations were located at college universities and held non-commercial licenses.

Questions were individualized for label executives and music directors, but were designed to draw comparisons between the two groups. The label executive's survey was also designed to draw comparisons between the labels themselves, and their differing attitudes toward college radio marketing.

To establish the rationale influencing each company's involvement with college radio, questions were asked regarding company background and college radio marketing capabilities. Questions were also formulated in an attempt to determine the executives' attitudes toward college music directors. Questions regarding company marketing objectives and the role of charts were included. The researcher hoped to establish a basis of comparison of marketing efforts for commercial stations, as well as to establish a level of priority for college radio marketing efforts.

The survey prepared for the music directors included questions regarding the background of the station, as well as audience demographics. The music directors were asked to describe their format and programming philosophy in an effort to determine their attitudes surrounding the role of college radio. Questions related to the station's reporting status and the importance of charts were included. The researcher compared the music directors' responses regarding the charts to those of the label executives. The music directors were asked about their relationships with label representatives, and service differentiation between the record labels.

All of the participants were asked to provide personal insight into the past and future of college radio.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher analyzed the data by compiling the responses to each question. A comparison of the responses revealed areas of similarities, as well as opposing viewpoints. The responses were documented accordingly.

## ***INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS***

### **Label Executives**

Tim Adams is owner of Ajax Records in Chicago, IL. Adams attended the University of Notre Dame, where he worked at the campus radio station for three years before graduating in 1988. He also worked at a fanzine before founding Ajax in 1989. To date he has had nineteen releases consisting mostly of the 7-inch format.

Frank Bridges is owner of Well Primed Records, located in New Brunswick, NJ. Bridges' background includes work at WRSU radio station, located on the campus of Rutgers University, as well as work at the campus newspaper. In addition, he worked at Hannibal Carthage Records, an independent label. Bridges founded Well Primed Records in September 1990. He is also a member of the band Kiaro Skuro.

Charlie Cameron is the National Promotion Director at Warlock Records in New York, NY. Warlock is an independent label which also encompasses a separate department hired to do promotions for major

labels. Warlock focuses on urban radio across the United States, as well as some radio in Canada, Japan and France.

Beth Ellison is head of Radio Promotions for Moist Records/Baited Breath Productions of Chapel Hill, NC. Moist/Baited Breath is two different labels working together as an independent company. They handle their own distribution or are distributed by an independent distributor. Ellison worked in college radio as music director of WZMB at East Carolina University.

Albert Garzon is Founder/Owner of Community 3 Records in Brooklyn, NY. Founded in 1985, Community 3 is an independent label and distributor which began as an outlet for bands that Garzon was producing. The label has a distribution network in America, as well as in Europe.

Patricia Hauseman is Atlantic East Coast Progressive Marketing Representative for Atlantic Recording Corporation, WEA Atlanta Branch. Hauseman began her career at Georgia State University's WRAS. She interned at Virgin Records in the pop department and also at Atlantic Records in the alternative marketing department. She was appointed to Southeast Promotions and Marketing-Alternative Music Division. In November 1990, Atlantic restructured its Alternative department and Hauseman was given her present position, which focuses on progressive marketing at the retail level.



Mike Kondo is Assistant Director of Promotions at Sky Promotions located in Norcross, GA. The company began as Sky Records in 1987 in an effort to expose local product. At the time it was exclusively a label, but became an independent promotions company to cut telephone costs. Major labels solicit the services of Sky Promotions to promote their releases. Sky is now involved in retail, and the company has its own distributors.

Jon Pernick is Florida Promotion/Marketing Manager at Elektra Records. Pernick was general manager at WFIT while attaining a Masters Degree from Florida Institute of Technology. He was employed by *Spin Magazine* in 1987. In 1990 Elektra established an Alternative Marketing and Promotion department, and Pernick assumed the position of Southern Regional Alternative Marketing Promotion Director until December 1991.

Josh Rosenthal is Associate Director of Artist Development at Columbia Records in New York, NY. Columbia's college department was under the promotional arm of CBS Records and fell under Sony Music's College department when Sony bought CBS in 1989. In 1990, Columbia established an Alternative Department which entailed college radio promotion. Rosenthal became the Regional Manager of Alternative Music.

## **Music Directors**

Brian Berkey is music director at WJRH, licensed to Lafayette University in Easton, PA. WJRH holds a non-commercial educational license and radiates 10 watts. The station is student operated.

David Brown is music Director at KLAX, licensed to The University of California at Berkeley. KLAX is licensed as a non-commercial station and radiates 508 watts which reaches the entire Berkeley community, as well as a large portion of the San Francisco Bay area. The staff is all volunteer and consists of 50 percent students and 50 percent non-students. Because KLAX is surrounded by progressive communities, there are at least three stations that directly compete in the alternative format.

Randy Bullock is music director at WXYC, located at The University of North Carolina--Chapel Hill campus. WXYC is student operated and radiates 450 watts.

Jeff Clark is part of the selection committee at WRAS on the campus of Georgia State University. WRAS is 100,000 watts and effectively reaches the entire metropolitan Atlanta and surrounding areas. There are three other college stations in the market, including WREK at Georgia Tech.

Markus DeShon is music director at Georgia Tech's WREK. The Radio Communications Board of Ga. Tech holds the non-commercial educational (NCE) license. The staff is completely students. WREK competes in the Atlanta market with 40,000 watts.

Mike Hinds is music director at KSPC, located on the campus of Pomona College in Claremont, CA. The station's 3,000 watts broadcasts to 5 million people in the inland empire east of Los Angeles.

Chris Lowry is program/music director at WRVU, licensed to Vanderbilt Student Communications. Located on the Vanderbilt campus and broadcasting with 14,500 watts, WRVU reaches metropolitan Nashville and surrounding counties.

Darryl Torrell is music director at WUTK, Knoxville. The station is licensed to the Department of Broadcasting of The University of Tennessee and is non-commercial education status. WUTK is presently radiating 128 watts, but is involved in fundraising activities to raise the wattage to 800 watts.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS**

This study documented the attitudes of nine record company executives toward the role of college radio in the music industry. To reveal differing attitudes among the labels, the researcher included companies which represent various tiers within the music industry. Three of the executives are representatives of major labels, three represent large scale independent labels, and three are owners of small independent labels. The labels are located in various cities.

In an effort to address both sides of the issue, the researcher also documented the attitudes of eight college radio music directors toward the music industry. The music directors represent college stations from big, medium and small markets across the country. To reveal trends in programming philosophies and attitudes, station playlists were examined as criteria for inclusion in this study.

The researcher conducted in-depth personal and telephone interviews with the seventeen participants. This chapter presents their responses to interview questions listed in the Appendix.

The questions asked to record company executives were aimed at getting information regarding the marketing of college radio. Questions asked to music directors were aimed at getting information regarding programming decisions, and the rationale behind them. However, a

series of questions was asked to both groups in order to examine their relationship with each other.

## **RECORD COMPANY EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Description of College Radio Marketing Efforts**

#### **Major Labels:**

All of the record label executives interviewed promote product to college radio. However, the size and resources of each label varied. The major labels included in this study have separate marketing departments to specifically handle college radio. These departments have financial support and resources available which provide an advantage in promotional service. The majors also have their own distribution networks which provide extensive product saturation.

Elektra is a major label which is a branch of the WEA (Warner-Elektra-Atlantic) distribution network. Elektra has been servicing college radio stations with records since the early eighties. It established a formal department to handle alternative music in 1990 (Pernick 1992). The department employs four people and, according to Jon Pernick, does not have a budget per se, but is "treated as well as other departments" (Telephone interview 1992). Elektra's general policy is to provide service to college stations which report to *The College Music Journal (CMJ)*. Approximately five hundred stations currently subscribe to *CMJ*.

Columbia Records has been providing service to college stations for thirty years in one form or another. However, the company did not have an "alternative department" until 1990. As Regional Manager of Alternative Music, Josh Rosenthal split the responsibilities of overseeing the servicing of college and commercial alternative stations. Two regional managers have a support staff of forty to fifty college representatives (reps), who are in the field to deal with college radio. These representatives are "on the street, going to record stores and going to clubs peppering the towns with information about our artists" (Rosenthal 1992). Columbia services approximately five hundred stations across the country, and is budgeted through Sony Music Distribution (Rosenthal 1992).

### **Independent Labels:**

There are several tiers of independent labels. Some independent labels take advantage of major label distribution networks which enable them to get product to markets across the country. Some independent labels hire their own distributors. These independent distributors are not an "arm" of major labels. Independent labels that use these distributors are often at a disadvantage because the independent network is not as broad and therefore, the product does not have extensive market saturation. Small independents distribute their own records using the postal system, which provides limited distribution.

Sky Records uses independent distributors. Unlike major labels that have separate departments to handle alternative music, Sky is

focused only on alternative music. As a result, Sky deals exclusively with college radio and "Commercial Alternative" stations. The label currently services approximately 580 stations, and has a staff of two promotion people (Kondo 1992).

Moist Records/Baited Breath Productions distributes its own product, or uses independent distributors. Like Sky Records, Moist/Baited Breath focuses only on alternative music, and deals exclusively with college and commercial alternative stations. Ninety-five percent of the stations serviced are college radio stations. The company is two years old and employs four people. Beth Ellison is in charge of radio promotions and describes the budget as: "how much we send out rather than how much we spend" (Telephone interview 1992). Moist/Baited Breath currently services approximately 375 stations.

Warlock Records distinguishes approximately a hundred college stations considered to be "the bigger ones that report...the more professional type organizations" (Cameron 1992). Three people are employed to handle those priority stations and two additional staff work the hundreds of other college stations (Cameron 1992). When asked about the budget for college radio, Charlie Cameron responded, "Basically you try to do it with as little money as possible. You really don't spend money on college radio" (Telephone interview 1992).

Ajax Records is described by owner Tim Adams as "a typical independent label" (Telephone interview 1992). Adams is the entire staff and he services between 120-175 college stations. Adams says

there is no budget: "I figure up how many promo copies I want to send out and I just send them" (Telephone interview 1992).

Community 3 is another small label, and is run by owner Albert Garzon and an assistant. Community 3 services stations that "in general give our records a fair chance and we don't have to run up huge phone bills tracking everything" (Garzon 1992). According to Garzon, "We're a small label, and rather than send out records to four hundred radio stations, half of which won't even check it out because they are so deluged with product with major labels, we've focused on 150-200 stations that have been consistently supportive" (Telephone interview 1992).

Well Primed Records is a small, young company that is staffed by one person: owner Frank Bridges. Bridges described his efforts as "grass roots" (Telephone interview 1992). The artists on Well Primed take an active role in self-promotion. According to Bridges, "The label could be considered a co-op because the bands contribute financially. I'm just one person and basically I do everything, but each band is a representative to help push product" (Telephone interview 1992). The label services approximately 170 stations.

### **Criteria for Service**

Each of the label executives was asked what criteria, if any, must be met by college stations in order for the company to provide record service. The major labels and larger independent labels serviced stations based on reporting status to trade publications.



There are several publications which chart alternative music and monitor airplay on college stations. The list includes: *The College Music Journal*, *Rockpool*, *R&R*, *Billboard*, *Friday Morning Quarterback*, *the Gavin Report*, *The Hard Report*, *HITS Magazine*, *Album Network*, *The Ward Report*, and *Rockpool*.

*The College Music Journal* provides a description of its tabulation system: *CMJ* chart information is based on combined airplay of reporting commercial and college/non-commercial radio stations. Statistics are compiled from point totals tabulated by positions of artists on airplay reports, then multiplied by station code factor, which is based upon programming, market size and market impact (*College Media Inc.* 1992).

Most of the trade publications rank college stations based on similar factors. College stations are weighted according to the influence each has on the charts, and are prioritized accordingly. Consequently, record service to the stations varies according to which trade(s) they report to. Hauseman explained:

WTUR, who reports to *Gavin*, can have the exact same playlist as WBUR, who reports to no one, but we'll call [WTUR] first because, unfortunately, the music industry looks at chart numbers and looks at sales. Your chart numbers are your report card every week and that's how you prove whether or not you've done bad or done well with an artist. (Personal interview 1992)

According to Elektra's Pernick, "As a general policy, [a station] was at least reporting to *CMJ*" (Telephone interview 1992) in order to receive service. "We have two different mailing lists. One is for the

higher level *Gavin* and *R&R* [reporting] stations. And the lower one is for all [other] stations" (Pernick 1992).

Reporting status is also a factor at Sky Records. Kondo explained, "They [college stations] have to report somewhere to make it worth our time. I've got stations that report to *CMJ* that I don't call, but we service. They still report so they can help down the line" (Personal interview 1992). Charlie Cameron of Warlock Records also determines service based on, "The ones who report" (Telephone interview 1992).

At Columbia, stations are prioritized not only "according to *CMJ*," but also "based on where they are--if they are on a big campus and have good wattage and are in a large community" (Rosenthal 1992). Rosenthal explained, "It doesn't pay to service carrier current stations" (Telephone interview 1992). Similarly, at Elektra, college stations are "based on their impact: on potential listeners. The lowest priority might be a carrier current station [because] they are so limited in how they are able to broadcast, [and] in the number of listeners they have. It reaches a level of cost efficiency" (Pernick 1992).

Beth Ellison at Moist/Baited Breath saw this situation differently. She said, "We've got stations that are cable only that you can only [pick up] in the dorm. Some ten watts or one hundred watts, but they are great stations and they play really good music, so we service them" (Telephone interview 1992). Service is "according to playlists and the response people give me over the phone" (Ellison 1992). However, Ellison acknowledged:

It's really hard to service a station, even if they are really good,

if they don't report to *CMJ* or *Rockpool*, because that's our way of getting reflection of who's playing what. It's publicity for us. There's that ugly end of it--the publicity, the reporting thing. You'd like to say it doesn't matter about the charts, but it does. We are trying to run a business here. (Telephone interview 1992)

Among small independent labels, it is not the reporting status of stations, but rather their playlists and feedback, that determine service. The rationale is that the small companies can only afford to send records to stations that are most likely to play them. If a playlist reflects a tendency to play independent music, they are serviced. Albert Garzon explained:

It's playlists and the relationship we've developed with the stations [that counts]. We can count on them to listen to all our releases and add what they deem they should. They are anxious for the new shipment and new releases and they give them their fair shot. Those are the stations that I spend time tracking and seeing how they develop. But if they don't call and their playlists continue to look the same--the sort of homogeneous major label type playlist--then we will not service them or be inspired to. (Telephone interview 1992)

Tim Adams at Ajax also determines service according to station playlists:

If I've seen what other records they're playing [and] if they are similar to the types of music I'm putting out, then they will get the records. It's the stations that mostly play major label stuff that are obviously never going to be interested in what I'm doing [so] I won't send them [product]. (Telephone interview 1992)

Comparatively, the independent labels were disadvantaged due to the size and resources of the majors. The independent labels did not have the budget to provide extensive service. As a result, they could not afford to provide records to all stations, or call stations to follow up on records.

### **Marketing Strengths of College Radio**

When asked about the marketing strengths of college radio, the professionals agreed that college stations are open to experimentation, and are avenues to expose new music.

We know college radio is our audience for the kind of music we put out. They [college radio listeners] buy more albums and go to more live shows and clubs than any other age group. They are very quick and open to unusual stuff and they'll give something new a chance quicker. (Ellison 1992)

[College radio] increases individuals' awareness of the music that's coming out, because college radio tends to attract students who are most interested in "new" music. And they tend to be the most enthusiastic about it and they'll convert their friends over to it. (Adams 1992)

At college radio they're open to so much more music than commercial stations. College will take it and listen to it and do something with it. You can expose people to bands that wouldn't get heard anywhere else and that deserve to be heard. It's a great proving ground for records to see what people will like and, if they hate it you'll know it right away. It's great to test things out and build a base there and give them time to grow instead of dropping them if they don't get the sales. (Kondo 1992)

The professionals at the major labels recognized the potential for crossover as a marketing strength of college radio. Crossover is valuable because it breaks the record into other formats, such as CHR (Contemporary Hits Radio) or AOR (Album Oriented Rock), which are on a commercial level. The result is larger audiences and increased sales.

College radio definitely lends a street level hipness to what you're doing. These are the people closest to the street, these are the people who know what's going on in music, these are the people who play the records first. It gives you so much more credibility when you're dealing with higher formats. When you're dealing with commercial alternative, you have the street buzz. Then you go from commercial alternative to pop. You need college radio to give an artist a hipness factor. (Hauseman 1992)

College is a time when there are a lot of young people around. They have disposable income, they're curious, they're exploring, they're learning about music. Music is part of their lifestyle. It's a hip thing. From the record company's standpoint [college radio] seeds the marketplace for hopefully bigger things. (Rosenthal 1992)

We've always believed in this kind of music. It's a matter of the general public being open to alternative styles of music. As a result of that we're just trying to capitalize and make sure our product is out there. Our objective is to chart records, to help cross them over and to sell records. (Pernick 1992)

College is still growing and growing and we have to make retail realize this. The best way to start to cross over is through college because you get less resistance. (Cameron 1992)

## **How Much Emphasis is Placed on Crossover Potential**

Although several of the label representatives considered the crossover potential of college radio to be a marketing strength, the significance of crossover varied.

According to Pernick, whether a record is crossed over depends on the sound of the record. "I think every time a record is doing well at alternative, labels look at the potential of crossing it over. It's just part of the mix--where can we take the record next" (Pernick 1992). Rosenthal agreed that crossover only comes into play with particular projects. However, he acknowledged, "We want everything to succeed. We want all our records to do well" (Telephone interview 1992). Hauseman's response was similar: "The company wants every record to sell as many as possible" (Personal interview 1992).

Crossover is viewed quite differently at independent labels. Ellison explained, "We've got very few bands that look like they're going to go mainstream. We know who our audience is and it's not mainstream" (Telephone interview 1992). Another problem independent labels face in an attempt to crossover is the expense involved in taking on another format. According to Kondo, "We don't have the resources to crossover to Top 40 and AOR because it's calling another group of five hundred stations and you just can't afford to do that as an indie" (Personal interview 1992).

## **Singles**

The literature indicated a tendency for record companies to increase the marketing of singles in an effort to focus airplay and impact the charts. In an attempt to determine if such a ploy was being incorporated into the marketing of records to college radio, the researcher questioned the label executives on their company's policy on singles.

The major labels use the single as a set up tool for the up-coming album release. Pernick explained the rationale behind the single:

From the label point of view, to break an artist, you want to play the same song over and over again to promote and to generate record sales, and to create a name so that people will remember who this band is. If you play eight different songs, only your most active listeners will start to pay attention and understand who this band is. Labels will work singles to define [artists] and keep concentrated. (Telephone interview 1992)

Singles are also used to extend the life of an album. According to Cameron,

You want the record to last as long as possible and the best way to do that is a single. We don't like to give stations albums. The only time you give them the album is if the record seems like it's not going to happen so you throw the album in as a more desperate measure. (Telephone interview 1992)

However, "most college radio reps know that college radio is not really a singles format" (Rosenthal 1992). Pernick agreed, "In general

the mass college audience plays what ever they want to off records. Some stations refuse to play singles. They have to have the full album before they play it" (Telephone interview 1992).

Small independent labels use the 7-inch format (a mini-album featuring more than a single song, but less than a full album) as a more efficient way to introduce a band. Adams noted, "The 7-inches are the most inexpensive means for a new band to create music and get heard" (Telephone interview 1992). "We use 7-inch singles as a way to introduce the band [and] to develop their press kits early on without spending all the money on a full cd (compact disc) project, when nobody's really heard of the band" (Garzon 1992).

Independent label executives are concerned, though, that college stations are becoming less responsive to the 7-inch format.

College stations that don't play 7-inch are resigning themselves to the fact that they are going to wait for something to get to a bigger level before they're going to play it. It just takes more money to make an album or cd as opposed to a 7-inch. It's frustrating sending records to a station that are a lot better than a lot of the major stuff they get. You get playlists that are this week's flavor of the month from England--just because that label has the money to flood the station with copies and phone calls and all this stuff. (Adams 1992)

The stations included in this study were divided on the issue of playing singles. Some stations have a policy not to play singles. However, the 7-inch format is generally is considered different from the single release, and is treated as a full length project.



## **Response Toward Music**

In an attempt to determine a tendency at college radio toward major or independent product/service preferences, the label executives were asked to evaluate music directors' perceptions of their music.

The executives acknowledged that some music directors distinguish between major label and independent label product. However, they agreed that how music directors respond toward music depends on the artist. "It varies on a record by record basis. If it was The Cure, for the most part, 90 percent of the stations would be raving about it and 10 percent of the stations would scream that [The Cure] are not new music anymore and they're not relevant to their station" (Pernick 1992). Pernick defined these latter stations as "the purists."

Several of the label representatives acknowledged this "purist" attitude among music directors.

There's always a couple of music directors that think you're Satan because you work for Sony. In the past five years there has been a lot of major labels eating up a lot of independent labels and getting those bands on their label. A lot of [music directors] begrudge us for it. There are a few stations that weigh independents heavier. (Rosenthal 1992)

Mike Kondo asserted that there is definitely a difference in music directors' perceptions of major and independent labels. According to Kondo, "They [music directors] think the major's stuff is getting too slick and over-produced for college while indie [product] is still raw sounding. For being an indie, a lot of the music directors will help you out. It's really good in that respect: they do want to see the indies do well"

(Personal interview 1992). Ellison agreed, "Eighty percent or more [music directors] will say 'Oh great, an independent label...we'll give them a chance, we'll listen to them'" (Telephone interview 1992).

Due to lack of resources, the smaller independent labels are limited in the feedback they receive from music directors regarding their product.

There are a handful of stations that are really into what I'm doing on Ajax, and those stations always send playlists and always play the records and write notes saying to keep us on the list. (Adams 1992)

It all depends on our correspondence from stations. Some are excited to hear from Community 3 and others, you would think would have known about us after seven years of service and seven years of dialogue in *CMJ*. But [they] are completely clueless and have never even heard of the label and lacked the interest to investigate it more. There's md's out there that are really hungry to get a hold of these records so they have interesting programming for their communities. Other stations have absolutely zero interest in it. (Garzon 1992)

### **Rate the Qualifications of Music Directors**

The record company executives' evaluation of music directors naturally varied from complimentary to critical.

Kondo stated, "Some are very professional and organized. It has to do with their interest in music and their knowledge of the format itself" (Personal interview 1992). Charlie Cameron rated the cooperation and feedback at the college level as "very good" (Telephone interview 1992) and Patti Hauseman considered feedback to be "198 percent excellent." She explained, "A lot of [music directors] are open, very knowledgeable

about the music, and are really receptive about playing music, or at least giving something a chance" (Hauseman 1992).

The importance of fairness was expressed by several of the professionals. "A music director has to be fair. I'd say it is his responsibility to listen to something once and then if he doesn't feel that it is right then he shouldn't play it, but at least listen with somewhat of an open mind" (Rosenthal 1992).

John Pernick considered music directors to be "more or less friendly [but] generally there isn't much professionalism." He explained:

Most music directors at college radio really cared about whether they liked [the record] or not--their personal feelings for a record or their staff's personal feelings for a record and not their listening audience. It's actually very much a dichotomy between the way a commercial pd or md thinks and the way a college student thinks. (Telephone interview 1992)

Mike Kondo also addressed this issue:

Some stations will play something even if they hate it, but they know their audience will like and listen to it. That's a good station to deal with. But some stations, if their md doesn't like it, it doesn't get airplay and that stinks, but they have the power to do it. And there are some [music directors] who will do things because they get tickets or a ton of promo stuff. (Personal interview 1992)

Due to restrictive budgets, small independent labels rarely make direct contact with music directors. They send the product, but seldom follow up with phone calls:

I don't get into all that. Our situation is such that we service stations where we don't need to make a bunch of follow-up calls. (Garzon 1992)

We haven't called music directors due to budget and also time. All radio for us is kind of a shot in the dark. (Bridges 1992)

I just send [product] and record who plays them. But the mass majority of stations never get back to me. They may even be playing it, but they don't have the money to send playlists and I don't have the money to call, so I don't know if they are being played. Sometimes I'll borrow a copy of *CMJ* and look at the lists. (Adams 1992)

In summary, the label executives interviewed revealed a high degree of divergence between major labels and independent labels, not only in their organizational structure, but also in their approach toward the marketing of music to college radio.

## ***MUSIC DIRECTORS RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS***

### **Describe the format and programming philosophy**

Several of the music directors described their format as "free form," meaning a non-restrictive approach to programming. The disc jockeys are given freedom of choice in the selection of music. However, the role of music director is to preview and select that music which is made available for the deejays to make airplay decisions.

When programming WXYC, Randy Bullock looks at the musical tradition in any given genre. As a result:

We represent a lot of genres and represent them deeply and that's ingrained in our philosophy. XYC tends to play the things that are either closer to the original roots of that genre or the furthest extremes of that genre, and the in-betweens--that sort of commercial mudslide--we just avoid. There's no reason to play that in our philosophy because it is really not furthering anything--it's not bringing anything to life. (Bullock 1992)

According to Mike Hinds, the format of KSPC is designed to be "alternative radio: that which is generally not given space or room by commercial stations in the area" (Telephone interview 1992). The philosophy, as described by Hinds, is:

...championing the 'do it yourself' aesthetic. It has to do with taking an alternative approach to music making and independent artistry. It involves artists who are doing more adventurous and different kinds of things--staking out their own territory. (Telephone interview 1992)

Similarly, David Brown claims KLAX is "there to play music you can't hear anywhere else" (Telephone interview 1992). Although the format is free-form, he has two stipulations:

Deejays have to play a diverse show, which includes three distinct styles of music within their show, and the deejays are required to play four featured tracks from new records per hour. (Telephone interview 1992)

Programming diversity is also stressed at WREK. The format is considered "block programming." However, it features a large spectrum of genres, including classical, rhythm and blues, jazz, African pop, and

rock. According to DeShon, the goal of college radio is to open up new horizons in music and explore new areas in music.

We're really not interested in the commercial aspect of music. We're not interested whether a band is successful or is going to be successful. It's strictly whatever the artistic value of the music is. The more original the music is the more likely I am to program it. (Personal interview 1992)

WUTK's Torrell adheres to a similar philosophy when making programming decisions. He will not add music he considers to be too commercial sounding. He described such music as "very straight forward pop sounding--very well produced" (Personal interview 1992). In other words, that which is "not adventurous [or] sounds like it's been done before. The most creative songs will get airplay" (Torrell 1992).

Similarly, Lowry attempts to determine whether music has "any value to it" before he will add it to WRVU's rotation. He described the format as "mainstream alternative/college type alternative music" (Personal interview 1992). He defined this format as whatever people are not going to be able to hear on other stations. Lowry admitted that is the stereotypical definition of mainstream alternative. Lowry listens for music that has "merit":

If there is something that makes it stand out from other things. You can get twenty-five things that can sound the same. One of them might actually sound striking and the rest might just be there. In which case there is really no purpose to do anything with them. (Personal interview 1992)

Clark programs records he thinks are “cool and interesting and kind of different. I don’t want to program lowest common denominator radio” (Personal interview 1992). Clark described WRAS’s format as “alternative/college rock.” He explained that “you could look in *CMJ*, and out of the top fifty albums, we’re playing 75 percent of them” (Personal interview 1992). According to Clark, WRAS established the format in Atlanta and has been doing it since the late seventies. WRAS is the most powerful college station (100,000 watts) included in this study.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is WJRH, with only ten watts. Berkey acknowledged that his main objective is to get as much current music played as possible. However, current music accounts for only half of the programming. Berkey considered that to be the major problem: “Unfortunately, we play a large bit of classic rock” (Telephone interview 1992). Berkey admitted that the music he makes available is music he likes personally.

Each station included in this study featured specialty programming in their format. The specialty shows spanned the gamut of every musical genre from rap to polka, from foreign language to spoken word, and everything in between. Each of the stations is considered an outlet for new music, playing anywhere from 30 to 80 percent current releases.

### **Description of Audience**

Due to their non-commercial status, college stations historically are not included in the ratings services which tabulate listenership at commercial stations. Although some stations engage in their own in-

house surveys, most have no detailed information regarding their audiences.

WRAS was the only station in this study which had any kind of statistical information regarding its audience. Because WRAS has 100,000 watts in the Atlanta market, it is a major competitor for the listening audience. The now defunct Birch rating service included WRAS in its research of the Atlanta market. Despite access to such research, Clark considered the target audience to be "people who are open to new music" (Personal interview 1992).

Although none of the stations had access to market research regarding their audience, the music directors were able to speculate about the characteristics of their listeners. Although they are college stations, located on university campuses and operated by students, the majority of music directors believed their audiences consist largely of non-students. This was typical of the stations located in large cities with wattage to cover a large area. Brown offered an explanation: "Large homogeneous universities do not lend themselves to college radio listeners" (Telephone interview 1992).

The music directors generally agreed that their listeners could be categorized as aggressive about their music, and that the listeners take an active role in selecting music. According to Brown, "they know to tune to the left side of the dial for different music" (Telephone interview 1992).



## **Label Service**

The college stations varied in the amount of product which they receive from labels. The smallest station, WJRH, averaged ten to twenty releases per week, while WRAS received fifty to one hundred releases weekly.

The music directors distinguished between major label product and independent label product. "Indie labels tend to be more adventurous in what they do" (DeShon 1992). Most often the major labels have the advantage of better sound quality and their records are "well packaged and slick" (Brown 1992).

Although several of the music directors acknowledged a personal preference for music on independent labels, they emphasized that there is both good and bad music on both major and independent labels.

Product promotion was recognized by each of the music directors as a tactic to influence airplay. However, they acknowledged that the activity is predominantly practiced by major labels.

"Labels will push product with promotional stuff. They'll send extra cds, they'll send post cards, stickers, press material, toys. I have a wardrobe now thanks to these record companies" (Torrell 1992). Hinds claimed, "Somebody from a major label was trying to push this or that on me and he said, 'I can't believe you're not playing that. Should I send more things to you?'" (Telephone interview 1992)

DeShon acknowledged that the success of an album can definitely be influenced by promotion: "If you've got money behind an album, you

can get all your execs in every town calling the college stations [and] some [music directors] will listen to that" (Personal interview 1992).

The music directors agreed that major labels call more, service them with more copies, and provide promotional materials on a much larger scale than independent labels. Music directors also unanimously agreed that the reason for major label dominance was monetary restraints on the part of independent labels.

Indie labels don't have a budget to call [and] they don't have a budget to hire an independent promoter. (Bullock 1992)

The indie labels can only afford to send us one copy of everything they send out and they can't even afford to send us compact discs...they send vinyl. The major labels are not even printing vinyl anymore. We get three to five copies of major label stuff and if we start playing it, we get upwards of twenty-five plus copies. (Clark 1992)

## **Reporting Status**

As mentioned previously, there are several publications which chart alternative music and monitor airplay at college stations. While most of the stations included in this study report to several publications, all of the stations report to at least one trade publication: *The College Music Journal*.

The influence of the charts on programming decisions varied among the music directors. Only two of the music directors in this study acknowledged that they program music based on chart position. Berkey admitted:

It is not infrequent for me to add music solely because it is on the *CMJ* charts. I use them as a guide, and to a certain extent it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. [Deejays] start playing what's on the charts because it's on the charts, so it stays on the charts and it detracts from listening to other music. (Telephone interview 1992)

Berkey also acknowledged that he is influenced by product promotion: "It will stay in my mind and it will probably influence me somewhat" (Telephone interview 1992). Berkey mentioned name recognition among record companies as a benefit he receives from reporting.

Likewise, Torrell listed name recognition as beneficial. He also looks at the charts to determine whether to add a song:

I probably am a bit influenced by what I see that's charting, since the charts are compiled from all the different stations, chances are it's going to be thrown on many playlists [and] it will have bigger appeal. (Personal interview 1992)

All of the other music directors claimed that they are not influenced by charts. In fact, several of them were quite critical of charts:

I think a lot of it is oriented toward commercial success, so I'm not sure there's any real worth or not. As far as the overall Top 100 lists, I don't really care. It doesn't mean anything to me. I follow my own instincts. (Hinds 1992)

Charts are not important. I guess in a way they are a negative influence. We don't follow charts except to say "Ooh, look what's at number one. That's disgusting." (DeShon 1992)

For us [charts] are unnecessary. Obviously for the labels they are very necessary. I don't follow them in any way. I don't want my station to sound like every other station. (Lowry 1992)

I don't know why people read that kind of crap. Chart numbers don't make much of a difference. I think chart numbers are overblown [and] they're bowed to a little too much. Things get pushed really heavy in college radio basically just to create something to crossover. (Brown 1992)

I don't follow charts at all. I trust my own instincts. I don't look at the charts because the charts can be manipulated by the labels. (Clark 1992)

Despite the music directors' overall disregard for the charts, they all admitted that they review the playlists of other stations in order to keep abreast of music they might not have heard.

Also acknowledged by all the music directors was that service by record labels has a direct correlation to station reporting status. According to Lowry, "Labels would stop servicing us if we didn't report because we wouldn't be able to help them" (Personal interview 1992). Bullock agreed, "That's the only way a record company is going to look at us and bat their eyes twice" (Telephone interview 1992).

Several of the music directors noted that stations are weighted according to which trades they report to.

I know what it means to be a *Gavin* reporter and I know we're weighted heavily by *CMJ*. It means you get lots of phone calls from lots of labels. (Brown 1992)

I talk to other people who don't report to *Gavin* and because we report to *Gavin* it puts us on a different level. [Labels] are willing to work with us a lot more. (Bullock 1992)

*Radio & Records* is the chart all the labels look at. It's supposedly the most important chart because mainly it's made up of commercial alternative stations. Because we're a *R & R* reporter, we get so much pressure. (Clark 1992)

Each of the music directors acknowledged that they feel pressure from label representatives who are promoting albums to gain chart position. Berkey claimed, "It's pretty overt in their approach: They say, 'We're trying to break this band and we'd appreciate anything you can do for us,' and things like that" (Telephone interview 1992). Brown agreed, "You can feel the pressure on the phone. They start giving me a little spiel about how they are going for adds next week and how it would be really nice if we could help support them" (Telephone interview 1992). According to Torrell, representatives have said: "We need numbers for this artist. These guys need a lot of help" (Personal interview 1992).

Hinds discussed an occasion when he received a form letter from a label which included a reminder of the "add" date:

The major labels are saying, "You're our little farm team. Be good little boys and girls and do this [add] for us so these people at AOR radio can look at these charts and say 'Oh, we got big adds at all these stations where our record got the number one add slot.'" So from there it can get a chart ball rolling.

I find it pretty insulting. Instead of saying: "Here, we think this is pretty good we hope you do too, please play it." It's just going for the charts [and] it ticks me off. (Hinds 1992)

A couple of the music directors revealed occasions when they received hostile treatment from representatives seeking adds:

I've had reps scream at me over the phone, hang up on me, threaten to cut off service just because I wouldn't play some stupid record they have. (Clark 1992)

[A rep] told me I was stupid and I had no business being music director because I'm letting my personal taste in music interfere with my decisions. (Lowry 1992)

Hinds believes representatives don't understand what he is trying to accomplish at KSPC:

When you try to express your opinion about anything to any of these label people, they won't accept it. Sometimes they really really push. The pressure is just unyielding. They're gonna do everything they can. (Hinds 1992)

Several of the music directors emphasized that the pressure did not influence them to add music. In fact, it swayed them in the opposite direction.

In summary, the philosophical theme at college stations is to preserve college radio so that creativity and musical innovation will be disseminated. Unfortunately, the music directors indicated that the institution of charts (and the resulting pressure from major labels to gain airplay for their records) is making that an increasingly difficult endeavor.

## **COMBINED RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS**

### **Role of Charts**

Charts play an important role in gaining airplay on commercial radio, as well as, gaining support in other facets of the industry such as distribution and retail. The role charts play in the music industry has been a long standing controversy. Until recently, there were no charts to monitor college radio airplay. Many believe that charts have changed the parameters of college radio promotion and marketing.

According to Rosenthal, charts "serve as a barometer for people higher up in the company to see what you're doing, to see what the progress is of a particular record on the chart. Part of it is to show people in charge that there is something going on with the record" (Telephone interview 1992). Hauseman agreed, "The charts are a report card. To the boss it's very important" (Personal interview 1992). "Charts are about bragging for the people in the industry" (Cameron 1992).

Charts are used as ammunition for the sales pitch. Pernick described their use as part of the presentation to build a case to gain airplay:

We would use *CMJ* or *Gavin* charts to help generate MTV play, or to get records played on "120 Minutes." We could use [charts] to cross a record over to the next level CHR radio, for local record stores to stock records--to show them that something is happening with it. (Telephone interview 1992)

Hauseman similarly used charts to gain airplay. She believes the chart numbers can provide credibility to her pitch, because chart position reflects airplay: "Oh, all these cool, hip stations like it...you should like it too!" (Hauseman 1992). According to Kondo, everybody wants a story. "You can get stations to listen to a record because you're doing well on a chart" (Kondo 1992).

In addition to gaining airplay, charts are also tools to promote records to retailers. Kondo further indicated:

The people the charts are most important for are your retailers. Specifically for us, being an indie, you have to be so tied into making sure your distributors know where you are on the charts because that gives them a story to go talk to the different stores, and then their salesmen can go talk to different stores. (Personal interview 1992)

Albert Garzon agreed with Kondo's assessment:

With the conservative retailer situation, retailers are only ordering bands that they perceive as being really "hot" or "happening" right now. So for an independent, the only way to overcome this conservative buying practice from the retailer is to be on a chart. (Telephone interview 1992)

Garzon acknowledged that although chart position provides a better sales pitch to retailers, "It's only a sales pitch." He believed the perceived role of charts is over-inflated by the industry:



I think they [charts] are necessary but I don't think that a company should exhaust too much of their resources on them. Your chart positions should happen naturally with creative servicing to the stations and retailers. A lot of labels put way too much time, run up huge phone bills and have bloated payrolls doing college radio support and really don't see the sales--just higher chart position--but not significantly increased sales to really justify all the effort. (Telephone interview 1992)

That opinion was shared by Tim Adams:

It's nice when you get reviewed by the trades, but making the college charts is really over-rated. I can't say I'm ever geared toward making the charts. It's nice but it doesn't have a correlation to sales [and] I don't use those numbers to turn around and convince other stations to play stuff. My stuff is too fringe. Some of my better selling records are ones that will never make it to the college charts. (Telephone interview 1992)

Similarly, Ellison revealed that chart position is not weighted heavily at Moist/Baited Breath. She stated, "We would rather see good sales and no chart position than good chart position and no sales" (Telephone interview 1992). According to Rosenthal: "Although it is implied that there is correlation between sales and good chart numbers, that's not always true" (Telephone interview 1992).

Several of the professionals expressed concern that the charts influence college music director's programming decisions. Ellison provided the following example:

At the first *CMJ* convention I went to there were college mds standing up and saying they program their whole station by the *CMJ* Top 100. I was stunned. I don't think that college stations should care what every other station

in the country is doing. But there are stations that only play stuff because it looks hip in *CMJ*. (Telephone interview 1992)

Josh Rosenthal echoed those sentiments:

I think music directors make the mistake of looking at a playlist and fashioning their playlist according to that playlist. As sad as it is, there are stations that look at a playlist and tailor their rotation or playlist to what everybody else is doing in the country. That's where the evil of charts enters in. I think people are swayed a great deal. The majority of programmers in almost every format are followers. They are not leaders and that's a big problem. There are maverick stations that take chances and don't particularly care what everybody else is playing. That's idealistically what college radio is supposed to represent. (Telephone interview 1992)

According to Jon Pernick, "Everyone is so conscious of numbers [that] people lose sight of the music in itself." He believes, "In a sense, it could be better off for the industry [without charts] because everyone has become so chart conscious" (Telephone interview 1992). He provided a commentary on the role of charts and their impact on college radio.

Charts are destroying college radio. Ten or twelve years ago college radio was just out there doing what they wanted to do--creating something because of their creativity, with no interference and no distractions. They created this great thing and more and more people started paying attention to it. Then record labels saw, "Wow, we can make money...we're selling records." So now college radio is falling into and becoming what rock radio was twenty years ago. And look where rock radio is today.

A lot of college students walk in and want to play The Smiths, Depeche Mode and The Cure. They are not as open to new music today as they were years ago. What made college radio so great years ago was because Depeche Mode was different from Journey, the Ramones were different from Yes...but where are we today? We're basically falling all within the same things. You look at the bigger bands and some of the brand new acts--they're almost all sounding alike. College students are not diverse anymore, the way they used to be. It's just another format. That is what I mean by the destruction of college radio. (Telephone interview 1992)

### **Credibility of Charts**

Despite the emphasis placed on charts, the respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the charts lack credibility. "People are not as legitimate as they should be in what used to be a legitimate operation" (Ellison 1992). Rosenthal acknowledged that some music directors lie about playlists. "A lot of times the playlists are bull," Cameron said. Ellison believes it is the biggest problem with college radio: "It reeks. There are some stations that say 'I really like that one this week...lets put it in [or] these guys give me a lot of free stuff, we'll put their album in'" (Telephone interview 1992).

Hauseman explained the reason for paper adds:

Because they are promo geeks. You pat their back and they pat your back. [For example] "Hey, you know I really hate this record but I'm going to add it for you." And a couple of weeks later they're asking you for the new Zeppelin box set and what are you going to do. You can't turn around and say "No." They might get mad and drop your record. You have to play the game to a certain extent. (Personal interview 1992)

Bridges credits bogus playlists to pressure from major labels:

Artists are just put on there because they [labels] hounded the station and the station will be influenced. I know for a fact that a lot of times the stations will just put on these major label artists to make their station look better and to look cool and also they do it so labels can see that they are playing this kind of stuff. (Telephone interview 1992)

Adams agreed, giving an example of a music director who lied to a major label representative, "telling them she was playing their stuff when she wasn't, just to get them off her back" (Telephone interview 1992). He also discussed what he termed the "art of making a playlist." "I know a lot of stations where it is the music director's favorite record and it has nothing to do with how many times the record got played" (Adams 1992).

Careerism and "brown-nosing" were mentioned by several of the respondents as the cause of bogus reporting. According to Pernick, "a lot of [music directors] have goals of getting into the music business and they see this as their route to reach that goal" (Telephone interview 1992). Adams believes it ruins radio stations when "people just want to get jobs in the music industry after they get out of college radio, so they kiss ass for their whole tenure and try to schmooze as much as they can and make as many contacts" (Telephone interview 1992).

### **Major Label Monopoly**

All of the respondents included in this study acknowledged major label domination over every aspect of the college radio industry. "It

seems that most stations are getting away from independent music. Looking at *CMJ* playlists it seems everything is on a major label or a indie band that is on a major label now" (Bridges 1992). Kondo believes the effect will be homogenization.

It takes the creativity out of college radio because you've got these slickly produced, multi-format type bands. It will go toward homogenized sound because major labels stepped up their promotion departments for alternative. They didn't exist five years ago and now everyone has got one. They start a band at college to build quick base and cross it over. (Personal interview 1992)

Garzon also indicated a trend toward homogeny:

[You're] dealing with the almost monopoly the few major labels have and therefore, you see their few pet bands on the top of the charts consistently. And a lot of playlists are looking very similar from high powered promotion companies pushing this or that. I've listened to college radio and it's a lot of major label releases that I've already heard a million times and really nothing new. They weren't really educating me as far as new bands and new sounds. It's that situation that I refer to when I use the word homogeny. (Telephone interview 1992)

The consensus among the independent labels included in this study was that they are at an extreme disadvantage compared to the ability of major labels to market college radio.

The major labels are pumping up college radio. The whole system seems to be slanting toward major labels. [College radio] is a tool for major labels. It's not a fun loving entity anymore. (Bridges 1992)

Major labels use college radio. Majors have their alternative marketing divisions and college radio is one of the marketing tools. Their two main goals [are] to get videos on '120 Minutes' and get college airplay. Then at some later point crossover to the mainstream audience. (Adams 1992)

Major labels just set their sights on college radio. They saw that "Alternative" was in fact a multi-million dollar a year industry if they chose to make it one. And they just put, and continue to put, pressure on college radio stations to play the hit--to play their music. A small label just can't compete with that kind of clout. (Garzon 1992)

The result, according to Rosenthal, is that people are not taking any chances, are not discovering anything; instead they're pandering. He admitted that maverick stations that play adventurous, unknown music are in the minority and shrinking (Telephone interview 1992). "Most stations and most people at college radio stations are not willing to listen to new stuff and try to turn people on to it. They come into college radio with some mindset of what's cool and they just maintain that" (Adams 1992).

Garzon agreed, "Playlists show very little experimentation. We've actually been asked by some stations not to even bother servicing them because the student body is only playing the very popular major label artists" (Telephone interview 1992). Hinds acknowledged the occurrence of that happening at college radio: "That seems to be a really weird thing to me--to have a college station think that something is not commercial enough" (Telephone interview 1992).

Pernick agreed that there is a trend toward homogenization: "We're basically falling all within the same things. You look at some of the bigger bands or you look at some of the brand new acts. They are almost sounding alike" (Telephone interview 1992). However, Pernick offered a different perspective regarding major label domination:

No one wants to destroy [college radio], but it's just a matter of personal characteristics and the way things happen. We live in a capitalistic society and all the record labels see this type of record selling, so what do they do? They go and put out more. To generate more money they might put a department head in charge of calling radio stations to generate more airplay because more airplay sells more records. But then as college students start becoming more familiar with this music, it's something they like and something they want to play, so they play it. And then they become excited when they see the next Cure record, which is great for the record label. Being able to sell 2-3 million records of a band like The Cure gives us the money to go out and find [unknown bands]. So its like a double edged sword. (Telephone interview 1992)

### **Discuss Changes**

All the participants in this study recognized a different atmosphere surrounding college radio. Pernick described it as "a progression in the whole marketplace due to a huge acceptance by consumers and radio listeners of the alternative format" (Telephone interview 1992). Kondo agreed, "The market has stepped up incredibly, especially by the major labels" (Personal interview 1992). Torrell noted, "There's a lot more popularity in alternative radio [and] there's a lot more major label stuff out right now" (Personal interview 1992).

"Major labels sign a lot more bands that in the past would have been left to independent labels, and would have been left to college radio only" (Brown 1992). The result, according to Bridges, is that "college radio is moving more toward commercial radio" (Telephone interview 1992).

Hinds referred to the buyout of labels and the buyout of the bands noting that,

...there has been some significant changes, but it hasn't changed as much as people think it has. I find it revealing to look at *CMJ* ten years ago and *CMJ* five years ago and it's still major label kinds of things. Seeing what has been popular on college radio over the past ten years--it's stuff you can hear on AOR radio and classic rock stations these days. (Hinds 1992)

Brown also analyzed the *CMJ* charts from five and ten years ago and agreed, "It was all major label stuff as well" (Telephone interview 1992).

All of the participants made mention of one particular band, Nirvana, as a benchmark. Garzon referred to Nirvana as the "quintessential indie band." According to Rosenthal, Nirvana is "the one record that everyone can point to and look at what a phenomenon it is and look at where it came from (Telephone interview 1992). "They [Nirvana] only had one album on an independent label and they got signed [by a major label] and became a number one band (Adams 1992). Adams continued,

It was a rarity in 1986-87 when somebody like Husker Du or the Replacements got signed to a major label after six or seven albums on independent labels. It got increasingly quicker and quicker before bands got signed. And now with Nirvana, it's



going to be the worst. I'm sure the pressure at these major labels to find another band, somebody just like Nirvana, is incredible. (Telephone interview 1992)

Clark agreed almost verbatim with Adams' above description:

Everybody is looking for the next Nirvana. If [a band] creates an initial buzz, the label is just scrambling because they want the next big thing and they don't even care what it is. They're just looking for something to sell. They're putting out so much stuff and signing so many bands. They're just throwing it against the wall and seeing what sticks. It's taken the whole purpose out of it. (Personal interview 1992)

In terms of an A&R level, every label is going to be looking for the next one. And that's the detriment. The expectations are going to be higher. When we should be thinking about signing bands and hoping they sell 50,000 copies, if we're lucky, instead of hoping that they'll go seven times platinum. And from here on out everything else is going to be a disappointment if it doesn't go platinum. (Rosenthal 1992)

## **Future Predictions**

The consensus among the participants interviewed in this study is that the "alternative" format will continue to grow and will take a larger place in mainstream radio. Hauseman explained, "People are now coming to realize that alternative is quality stuff. People are opening their minds more to music" (Personal interview 1992). Pernick agreed:

During the next several years you're going to find they will have a Top 40 station not only being rock 40 or dance 40, but you'll have an alternative 40 station where they are playing a lot of alternative music in the CHR format. We already see that happening. (Telephone interview 1992)

Pernick also noted that college radio will continue to get bigger. He acknowledged, "The attitude of college students is that, 'This is our band,' and when a CHR or Top 40 station starts playing it, they get upset and some stations will even boycott [playing] the band" (Telephone interview 1992). Rosenthal agreed:

Nirvana proved that you can circumvent what everybody thought was the answer, which is college radio. You can go around it, in spite of college radio. You can take what was once their music and turn it into mass pop culture. And that's an interesting lesson. Everybody thought that this was theirs, but suddenly realized that this is not theirs. What was once the province of the few is a plaything of the many. (Telephone interview 1992)

The independent labels shared a grim view of the future. "I would look for more independent labels to start closing, restructuring and scaling back" (Kondo 1992).

College used to be 90 percent indie [product] and 10 percent major. Currently it's 50-50 percent. I would look for majors--since they are starting to crush the indies so much now--I would look for that to swing to 60-40 percent some time in the next year. (Kondo 1992)

With the death of vinyl, and of course, finally the 7-inch, you're going to see less and less independent label action on college radio. It's going to create a playing field that is completely prejudiced against truly independent labels. It's going to be a game of money and people and phone calls and free t-shirts versus how good music actually is. It's pretty depressing. (Adams 1992)

I think we're in for more homogeny rather than less. This is big business and you do what ever it takes to win.

And if that means shutting down independent labels or excluding them, [majors] are going to do that. And it should be expected. What you would hope, is that on the other side you'd have people fiercely fighting for indie's freedom, which after all, is what America is supposed to be all about. Fiercely fighting for this and judging things more on musical content and ingenuity and artistic values rather than on corporate pressures. (Garzon 1992)

However, it was agreed that although the independent labels are in a period of decline, it is cyclical. According to Garzon, independent labels had a similar problem in the sixties and bounced back in the eighties (Telephone interview 1992). Rosenthal also noted the cyclical nature of independent labels, claiming that it is a positive thing:

I think you're seeing not a revival, but a revitalized spirit in the indie world. They are saying: "Well, we are going to maintain our independence," and they are very reverent about that. So deeply entrenched underneath all this absorption of independent labels and independent music, you're seeing another bubbling up. There is still a lot of interesting bands you'd never expect to be on a major label. (Telephone interview 1992)

Ellison believed there will be a "new underground":

Since there is such a large number of underground bands, the smaller ones will get overlooked by the major ones to a certain extent. So they need their venue too. I think there will be a really sub-deep underground revival of alternative music. (Telephone interview 1992)

According to Ellison, there are now three different levels of radio. She claimed, "There is commercial, mainstream college and

underground college. The mainstream and underground college stations are conflicting with each other, and the mainstream college and commercial [stations] are conflicting" (Ellison 1992). Hauseman sees the commercial alternative and college stations growing farther apart:

I think college radio is going to get a little wilder--not as conservative. They are going to start steering away from the mainstream alternative and be as it always was: a ground to break bands. It's going to go a little more left of center. (Personal interview 1992)

DeShon noted, "There is not much difference between [college and] commercial radio" (Personal interview 1992). However, he predicted a backlash among college stations. Similarly, Clark described a scenario:

What might force a lot of these college stations that are playing the label game right now and doing the generic stuff--is if these commercial alternative stations got started in these markets. In order for this commercial station to get ratings, they would have to program to the lowest common denominator within the alternative scene. So they would play the top twenty records on the *R&R* charts. If a station did that, it might force a station like mine to back off from playing that kind of stuff and get a little more radical. (Personal interview 1992)

College radio will start selling out because they're going to see that if we do this, this, and this right then we're going to get this, this, and this benefits. They're going to start to please not for the listener or for the music itself, but what is in it for them. Because of that happening, stations are going to rebel against that and move in the opposite direction. (Lowry 1992)

When asked to predict the future, several of the participants placed the emphasis on the music directors at college stations. Hinds noted:

It really does depend on how actively music directors seek out new music, as well as just letting it come to them. From there if they are really lazy, then they'll just be persuaded by the people calling them up wanting them to play their stuff. It depends on the individual and how much they buy into the whole major label hype machine. (Telephone interview 1992)

Ellison believes that the college industry has gotten too big and that everyone expects too much from each other:

College radio has grown out of proportion. There are a lot of college programmers that don't know what they are doing. It should not have gotten to the point where mds say they won't play this because it's major or we won't play this because it's indie. The label is not supposed to be your problem. The quality of music is supposed to be your consideration. Your responsibility as college radio programmer is to play good music. (Telephone interview 1992)

Rosenthal also emphasized the role of the music director in the future of college radio in the following commentary:

A lot of music directors just don't have a hold on history, or of anything other than what everybody else is doing. There are not that many original thinkers or mavericks in the format. There's an implicit struggle all the time between wanting to leave college radio alone and wanting them to play my records. I would like them to be more adventurous and tell me to go to hell and just play whatever they want and to be completely anti-establishment. There are few people who are really different and trying to do something new and they are the mavericks.

But for the most part, I'd say about 85 percent are just dullards. They are just sitting there. They're nice people and well meaning, but they don't know anything about music before 1983. And they don't care and they don't listen and they really don't like music much and I question their motives. It doesn't seem like there is that same revolutionary bent that dominated college radio when I was in it and prior to that.

It's only going to survive and grow if the mds take it upon themselves to have a renaissance...do something different and really cut against the grain of the lowest common denominator. If they continue to feed the denominator then you're going to have really boring radio and cookie cutter people listening. And it's in all the record companies best interest to let the format revitalize itself. (Telephone interview 1992)

A similar opinion was held by several of the music directors.

According to Berkey, college radio has the potential to be one of the last strongholds for new music. DeShon places great emphasis on the power of music. He believes that the integrity of music needs to be protected:

Maybe I'm on some sort of crusade. To me, the music has to be connected with the person making it. There has to be some feeling there. The person has to be expressing themselves or else it's not really music. It's just product. (Personal interview 1992)

"It's when you treat music as a commodity and you'll put anything out to make a buck. That's where it really makes things kind of sickening" (Adams 1992).

This issue was also viewed on a cultural level. Rosenthal acknowledged that radio is a microcosm of what's happening on a national level where people are not interested in culture. "It's a part of the mainstreaming of society. It's mass culture being sucked into the

MTV generation and it's being spoon fed to these kids. That's all they choose to look at and be involved in" (Rosenthal 1992). Garzon agreed that American music is becoming very safe and mainstream. "Our culture spawns great art, especially in underground music. But our culture doesn't want to support it" (Garzon 1992).

### **Summary**

Charts are causing the destruction of college radio as an outlet for diverse forms of music. Both music directors and label executives agreed that there is too much emphasis placed on charts. The result may be the demise of independent labels and innovative college stations.

The respondents concluded that the survival of college radio as a true "alternative" depends on the ability of music directors to get back to the basic precept upon which college stations were founded: experimentation in music.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS**

The counterculture phenomenon known as "alternative rock" has emerged from the underground to become a legitimate commercial format. As a result, college radio has become little more than fodder for a sub-industry of the corporate music culture. With so much money at stake, it is increasingly difficult for college radio to challenge the status quo in the music business and preserve its free expression.

This study documented the attitudes of nine record company executives and eight college music directors toward the present environment surrounding college radio and the music industry. Emphasis was placed on the artistic versus the economic imperatives of the relationship between college radio and the music industry.

In this chapter, the researcher compares the information obtained in the interviews with that contained in the review of the literature, as well as in the historical overview. Based on this information, the researcher will offer recommendations. Finally, suggestions will be made for further study.



## **SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS**

The interviews revealed a high degree of divergence between major labels and independent labels, not only in their organizational structure, but in their philosophy and approach toward the marketing of music to college radio. Independent labels are small and have very limited resources. As a result, independent labels focus exclusively on alternative music, which they market to a limited number of college stations.

With regard to budget and consequently marketing capabilities, the major labels have a tremendous advantage. The independent labels simply cannot afford to compete on the level of the majors.

Label service was based on different criterion. To receive service from major labels, stations must report airplay to industry trade publications. The objective is to attain chart numbers--the industry equivalent of popular success. The small independent labels included in this study based service on the likelihood of receiving airplay according to college playlists. The objective is to service stations which show a tendency to listen to and program independent music. The interviews revealed that such stations are decreasing in number.

College radio was recognized by all of the label executives as an outlet to expose new music. The potential for successful college radio artists to crossover to commercial airwaves was noted by executives at

the major labels. However, the independent labels did not have the resources or the determination to capitalize on crossover.

The music directors provided critical appraisal of the major labels' emphasis on crossover. Several of the respondents indicated that major label representatives are manipulating college radio music directors in their attempt to market music to commercial alternative stations, where the potential for profit is greater. Labels utilize charts to convince commercial programmers to jump on the airplay bandwagon.

Throughout the interviews, charts were viewed with a high degree of skepticism. The consensus among the independent label executives was that the perceived role of charts is over-inflated. They also observed that there is a misconception in the industry that charts correlate to airplay.

The majority of music directors were also critical of charts. They recognized that labels prioritize stations according to how much influence they have on the charts. Furthermore, they indicated that there is a correlation between a station's reporting status (to charts) and record companies' pressure upon the music directors of those stations to attain "adds." All of the music directors acknowledged they felt pressure from label representatives to add music to their rotation in order to gain chart position. The respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the charts lack credibility, despite their incorporation into the college radio scene.

All of the respondents acknowledged major label domination over every aspect of the college radio industry. This imbalance is due to the inability of the independent labels to compete in terms of marketing.

Throughout the interviews the issue of integrity was raised. The interviews indicated that airplay decisions are influenced by factors other than the quality of the music and whether it's the right sound for the station. Several of the respondents observed that college playlists show little experimentation. They expressed concern that college music directors are taking fewer chances on innovative music.

### ***A COMPARISON OF RESULTS AND LITERATURE***

The literature reviewed the historic relationship between "popular" music and its ideological and economic structures. However, the musical fare heard on college radio at that time was not considered "popular" by industry standards. College radio had a philosophy quite divergent from that of commercial radio; and due to its non-commercial status, was void of any economic liability within the industry. College radio was considered outside the realm of commercial radio and the "popular" music industry. As a result, those structures described in the literature were not applicable to college radio.

The literature defined "popular" music as whichever musical style sells sufficiently to be deemed successful or representative of an

exoteric audience. Furthermore, the literature suggested that every record must be directed toward a taste culture sufficiently large enough to promise a profit on the record (Denisoff 1986). Such a criterion did not apply to the early days of college radio. Instead, college radio appealed to esoteric taste groups which were too small to cause a record to go gold or platinum without moving into larger markets.

However, the interviews indicated that there has been an acceptance of the alternative format and record companies now seek to profit from the alternative format via exposure on college radio. The interviews also suggested that college radio is utilized as a tool to crossover music into other formats (specifically the commercial alternative format).

As a result, several college radio bands have garnered record sales and audience recognition large enough to be regarded as "popular." The interviewees offered the band Nirvana as college radio's latest proof of its ability to achieve popular success. Thus, it seems today's college radio has entered into the exoteric world of pop music.

The literature suggested two aspects of the popular music business which allow it to be called a culture industry: the large corporate nature of the business and the high output of product (Stratton 1983). Similarly, the record company executives in this study revealed increased output of product geared toward the alternative format. The music directors acknowledged a

complementary increase in number of records received, and consequently, in phone calls from industry representatives working those records at the college level. Again, college radio seemingly falls within the guidelines of popular music.

According to the literature, musical styles throughout the history of pop may be distinguished according to the quantity and forms of information which surround the playing and consumption of music. Furthermore, information about the position of records relative to each other according to some measure of popularity is widely disseminated and monitored, and published sales charts attract a high level of public interest (Straw 1988).

If such measurements establish popularity, then the interviews provided proof that over the past decade the alternative music style has made its mark on the history of popular music. It was repeated throughout the interviews that charts are the focal point in the promotion of the alternative format. Alternative music is no longer the disregarded fringe of the music industry, but instead an aggressively marketed division of popular music.

The literature also included a description of the promotional infrastructure of the business of selling records. Chapple and Garofalo claimed promotional departments are set up to sell the type of record that is most popular. They also asserted that some companies believe popular music runs in trends that can be consciously created and exploited by record companies (Chapple and Garofalo 1978).

Furthermore, the literature claimed companies can popularize a type of music by heavy promotion and subsidized exposure.

Those interviewed drew similar conclusions. There is presently heavy promotional endeavors directed at college radio by the major labels in an attempt to increase the popularity of the alternative format. More specifically, promoters have targeted college music directors in an effort to gain airplay for their records, and in turn, increase the recognition of the alternative format.

The music directors interviewed revealed they feel undue pressure from record representatives. The literature suggested the line between cooperation and exploitation of radio programmers is a thin one for the promoter, whose ultimate goal is to obtain airplay (Hirsch 1970). Several of the respondents interviewed interpreted the record companies pursuit of chart numbers as exploitive.

In addition, the literature described the "game" of the promoter: to make the program director feel obligated by offering perks which are reciprocated with airplay (Hirsch 1970). Although the literature was describing the scenario at commercial stations, the interviews provided evidence that the same practice has been incorporated into non-commercial college radio as well. The music directors interviewed documented instances of receiving perks in exchange for airplay. The record executives acknowledged the existence of the practice and considered it part of the business.

The literature described a trend in industry strategy toward marketing and selling a restricted number of products to a bigger

audience. The result is the increasing dominance of the biggest hits, both in terms of popularity and their monopoly over sales and air time (Koval 1988). The interviews, as well as an analysis of the charts, confirmed that this strategy is now being applied at the college radio level. Several of the respondents mentioned the domination of the college radio circuit by the same major label bands.

In addition, those interviewed showed concern over the increasing tendency among music directors to disregard music on independent labels and opt for the less innovative, albeit better financed music of the major labels. They predicted the homogenization of the format due to the lack of diversity and creativity on the part of today's college music directors. If that were to happen, it would be characteristic of mass culture in capitalistic society as it is outlined in the literature, supporting the conclusion that the culture industry is little more than the achievement of standardization and mass production.

The literature further suggested that the cultural products which achieve the greatest commercial success tend to be those that challenge the status quo the least, and those that appeal to the lowest common denominator of acceptability (Garofalo 1987). The increased pressure on college radio to produce crossover success has led to less challenging programming. Likewise, the respondents agreed that college music directors are increasingly programming music geared toward mass appeal.

In addition, the literature concluded that less variety in cultural forms is available. Rather than new ideas being manifested in cultural expression like music, there is a systematic reduction in the number of new ideas introduced (Koval 1988). The interviews indicated this to be the trend among college radio stations.

College playlists less frequently feature music on the “cutting edge.” Those interviewed place the blame partly on the music directors, who are becoming less open and responsive to innovative music, and partly on the major label monopoly on the dissemination of music. It seems alternative music has been absorbed into the mainstream and become merely another style of music, invalidated as a catalyst of change.

The literature described popular music as a monopoly industry that hands down material to the young, who accept it without question (Riesman 1957). Furthermore, Riesman offered a definition of two “taste units” which seem applicable to the two taste units revealed throughout the interviews. The first taste unit is characterized as the majority: an amorphous unit that reflects peer-group pressures. It is also considered a conformist unit. The second group is the minority group which is much smaller and comprises more involved listeners. This group is recognized by its dissent from mass produced culture (Riesman 1957).

Throughout the interviews, music directors were categorized according to these units. Consequently, programming decisions fall along these delineations as well. The respondents speculated that the



majority of college radio music directors fall into the conformist category, while the minority taste unit is shrinking.

To conclude, although the reviewed literature was written as a reflection of the relationship between commercial radio and the "popular" music industry, it can easily be applied to the present environment surrounding college radio. It is obvious that the music industry has incorporated college radio into its pursuit of popular success. As a result, today's college radio is an active participant in the promotion of "popular" music.

Such participation within the parameters of popular music suggests that college radio has entered a new era.

### ***PROBLEMS POSED BY CURRENT INDUSTRY ENVIRONMENT***

The interviewees recognized potential problems which seem inevitable if college radio remains on its present course.

Independent music is in danger of being completely phased out of the radio industry. Not only are there fewer independent labels, but those labels have fewer resources. In distribution numbers alone, the major labels have a monopoly on what music will reach an audience. That, combined with high-powered promotional capabilities, ensures airplay for major label product. Much of the independent product does not reach outlets for airplay, and, if it does, is not accompanied by promotional incentives for airplay. As a result, independent music is rarely heard on college radio.

Independent labels have long been the resource of musical diversity. Many have functioned as curators of ethnic and traditional music. College radio and independent labels worked together toward the common goal of promoting innovative musical genres. But with the cooptation of college radio by major labels, independents no longer have access to an audience for their music.

Unfortunately, there are cultural implications resulting from such a scenario. Many artists have produced music that has touched many lives, which would not have been possible without independent labels. Such music has received recognition and airplay on college stations, and consequently, has reached many parts of the world. Music plays a vital role in the cultural fiber of the world. The ability to produce a diverse range of music is essential. But also of utmost importance is the maintenance of an outlet for such music to be given exposure.

Another problem threatening college radio is the loss of creativity. The record company executives praised college radio for its open-minded approach to programming. They considered college music directors to be experimenters in music. However, it appears that the major labels that institute "hype" in their efforts to gain college radio airplay are taking advantage of that very situation. The interviews suggested that college radio programmers are becoming less responsive to experimentalism.

A glance at college playlists reveals that many of the same songs are being played at the majority of stations. The goal of airplay has

been achieved, but possibly at the cost of destroying that which the labels initially considered valuable: open-minded music directors and adventurous college programming.

The biggest problem is the charts. Charts dictate. The entire radio and record cooperation depends on the institution of charting music as the basis of the decision making process. The result is great emphasis placed on the pursuit of chart position. All the respondents acknowledged the influence of charts in the industry and now, in college radio.

The charts were viewed negatively by those interviewed. The music directors held very critical opinions of the institutionalization of charts in college radio. They criticized promoters for being pretentious and short sighted. They believe that most promoters are interested in getting them to add their record and not in the sound of their station. The researcher was surprised by the extent of animosity among the music directors toward record promoters who pressure them to add records. Major labels were cited as the most guilty of this tactic.

The priority of major labels is to attain chart position. The extent to which these labels go to reach that goal is a disservice to the industry. Freedom of choice in programming decisions has apparently been sacrificed for free compact discs and concert tickets.

There is also industry-wide concern that music directors rely too heavily on the charts. Jon Pernick sounded the alarm that "charts are destroying college radio" (Telephone interview 1992). The label

executives note that music directors are making airplay decisions based on what the charts reflect others are playing. Instead of making their own decisions, music directors are becoming followers. The result is increasing homogeneity within college radio playlists.

With so much emphasis placed on the charts, the researcher was surprised to discover the high degree of deceit within the college radio charting process. The respondents all revealed the dishonesty of the system. It was somewhat disheartening to discover that the old cliché: "You scratch my back and I'll scratch your back" (Hauseman 1992) represents the current attitude at many college stations and record companies. Not only does such practice promote illegal payola, but it destroys the integrity of the entire industry. Perhaps the most detrimental effect of false reporting practices is the destruction of a legitimate outlet for musical innovation. College radio, once the place where music mattered, is now the place where money matters.

### ***SUGGESTIONS FOR MUSIC DIRECTORS***

This study was based on a limited number of subjects and therefore cannot be generalized to the entire population of college music directors. However, the researcher would like to emphasize the call to action made by several of the participants of this study. They indicated the importance of each music director in the survival of musical innovation.

This study suggests a trend toward homogenization of the college radio industry. The researcher suggests the incorporation of a music review committee to broaden the spectrum of music programmed on college stations. Several people acting as music directors will alleviate undue pressure placed on one director by label representatives, as well as expand musical diversity at college stations.

It is the contention of those interviewed that the future of college radio depends largely on the ability of music directors to be leaders, not followers. The researcher agrees. What possible job satisfaction can a programmer receive from being compelled to always follow the leader, never helping his or her audience to grow by breaking new ground?

Music directors should take the initiative with the cuts they add, rather than choosing from the limited menu the labels are pushing at any given moment. There is plenty of other good music from which to choose. It is the privilege and the responsibility of college music directors to carry on the time-honored tradition of music exploration. As explorers have done for centuries, college programmers should continue to chart new territory and to be adventurous. Anything else will limit music innovation, and the college radio circuit which promotes it.

If history is to be a guide, music directors should reevaluate the present objectives of college radio. Genuine musical enthusiasm should take an upper hand to the profit motive. Unlike history, there is nowhere left to go once college radio is consumed by the music

industry. There is limited space on the dial, and the industry has pushed the spectrum to its limits. College radio truly is the last stronghold for musical evolution. College radio is the lifeline of music. Without such a resource, the world will be a much quieter place.

### ***SUGGESTIONS FOR LABEL EXECUTIVES***

College radio has existed in society as an outlet for innovation, a voice for action, an instigator of change, and always as a free spirit. Again, a look at history reveals corporate manipulation and the relentless pursuit of the profit margin as a destructive force. By pressuring music directors to succumb to airplay directives, the industry promoters are denying freedom of choice to programmers. The research suggests that the record companies are in fact programming college stations through tactics of bribery and outright payola.

Throughout the history of radio, record company executives chastised the radio industry for stifling innovation. In the case of college radio, the record industry should shoulder the blame for the demise of the last outlet for creativity in music. Record companies are business entities which must profit to survive, and the way they profit is through the commercialization of music. But it should be remembered that college radio was founded as a non-commercial enterprise. It is essential that its integrity not be undermined by corporate exploitation, which is customary within the record industry.

The research repeatedly indicated that there is a great deal of resentment among college programmers toward the corporate mindset of promoters. They are insulted by promoters who only care about their objective of the profit margin. The researcher understands the symbiotic relationship between radio and record companies. But the spectrum of music is so vast, it seems short-sighted not to let more of it be heard. College radio is not the place for artistic decisions to be bound up in financial directives.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study indicated several aspects of the college radio industry which warrant further study.

First, this study revealed cause for alarm that college radio is being corrupted with scandals of payola. A study is needed to document the extent of the accusations of payola. It is possible that industry regulation is necessary at the college level.

More research is needed to determine the extent of homogenization of college stations. This researcher noted a trend toward homogenization which could have serious implications at the cultural level. Foremost is the destruction of a legitimate outlet for free expression and musical innovation.

A study comparing station playlists would be insightful. Such a study would reveal the extent to which the product of major labels

dominates college radio. It may also better determine the position of the independent labels.

Another area for future study is a more in-depth analysis of the attitudes of college music directors toward record promoters. This study revealed a serious dichotomy of the objectives of music directors and record promoters. However, the sample was too small to generalize to the population of more than eleven hundred music directors. A more effective methodology would be a survey distributed to a large sample of music directors.

Information attained from the surveys would be useful to promoters who rely on a one-to-one relationship with music directors. In addition, the information could be utilized by music directors who are often confronted with the same situations, but have no basis of comparison. The results could provide solutions on an industry wide level.



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## **APPENDICES**



**APPENDIX A**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**  
*for*  
**COLLEGE MUSIC DIRECTORS**

**Audience Information:**

- \*What is your target audience? (student or local community)
- \*What are the demographics of audience?
- \*What percentage of your audience is students/non-students?
- \*How do you gather feedback from the audience?
- \*Does station have ratings info? Describe.

**Programming:**

- \*Describe the format.
- \*Explain the station philosophy toward music selection.
- \*Who makes music selections for airplay? (program/music director)
- \*Is there criteria for airplay? If so, what?
- \*What factors influence decision to add music to rotation? to delete?
- \*Do you individualize programming for your audience?
- \*Do you have specialty program features?
- \*What is the percentage of current, non-current, and local music?
- \*How long does a song stay in rotation?
- \*Do you air pre-selected cut chosen by label or do you choose songs?
- \*Do you drop songs which crossover to commercial radio? Why?
- \*Does station report? If so, to which publications? (CMJ, Gavin, R&R)
- \*How closely do you follow charts for music selection? Explain.
- \*How important/necessary are charts?
- \*What benefits, if any do you receive from reporting?

**Label Relations:**

- \*How many records do you receive weekly from labels?
- \*How many record reps contact you per week?
- \*Are you/your staff receptive to record promoters?
- \*How much time do you spend with label reps...tracking etc.?
- \*What is the number of major label contacts and indie contacts?
- \*Is there distinction between major and indie label service or product?
- \*Is there a preference for major label or indie label product? Why?
- \*Does product promotion (giveaways) influence chart success?
- \*Do you feel pressured by record promoters to add songs? Explain.
- \*What would you change, if anything, with regard to record service?

**Attitude:**

- \*Discuss the changes in college radio in past the two years.
- \*Predict future trends in college radio.  
(Where do you see college radio going?)

**Station Information:**

- \*What are call letters and city of license?
- \*What is station wattage and status of license? (NCE)
- \*Do students operate station? Are positions paid?
- \*How many other alternative/new music stations in mkt?

**APPENDIX B**

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

*for*

**LABEL EXECUTIVES**

**Company Information:**

- \*Name, title, company, distributed by label?
- \*What department entails college radio service?
- \*What is the budget for college radio promotion?
- \*What is the size of promo staff working college radio?
- \*How many college stations are serviced by you/your company?

**Radio Relations:**

- \*How long servicing college stations?
- \*Has service been consistent? Why/not?
- \*What factors determine which stations receive service? (size, watts)
- \*Do you require sales reports, playlists, tracking?
- \*Are there distinctions between a reporting station and a non-reporting station?
- \*How do you rate the qualifications of college program directors? (knowledge, experience, professionalism, competence)
- \*How do you rate feedback and cooperation at college radio?

**Marketing:**

- \*What role do Gavin, CMJ, and other charts play in promotion?
- \*How many albums/songs are you presently working at college radio?
- \*Do you promote pluralism per album? Explain.
- \*Has distribution of singles to college radio increased? To what effect?
- \*Are singles pushed more aggressively to chart?
- \*What is percentage of times college radio plays pre-selected "hot" pick?
- \*How much emphasis is placed on crossover potential?
- \*What are the marketing strengths of college radio in terms of the goals of the company?
- \*What percent of records sales are to college students?
- \*Define the objectives of your department regarding college radio.
- \*Can you estimate your company's investment in college radio?
- \*Evaluate the return on investment.

**Attitudes:**

- \*Discuss the changes in marketing of college radio over the past two years?
- \*What effect has the recent recession had on college radio/alternative promotion endeavors?
- \*Predict the future trends of college radio within your industry.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

<b>Add:</b>	The addition of a song to the radio station playlist
<b>AC:</b>	Adult contemporary; A radio format featuring light pop music
<b>AOR:</b>	Album oriented rock; A radio format featuring several songs from an album.
<b>Crossover:</b>	Promoting a song or artist to more than one radio format.
<b>Cutting edge:</b>	A term used to refer to an extreme limit; Avant-garde.
<b>Free-form:</b>	A radio format which allows the deejay freedom of choice in deciding what record to play.
<b>Indie:</b>	Independent record label
<b>Md:</b>	Music director; decides what songs to feature on the air and thus, on the playlist.
<b>Pd:</b>	Program director; decides format and program features.
<b>Playlist:</b>	List of songs featured on the air.
<b>Progressive:</b>	A style considered to be new and innovative.
<b>Promotional record:</b>	Record supplied by record company without charge.
<b>Rep:</b>	Representative of a record label.

## VITA

Suzanne Marie Holtermann was born in Madison, Wisconsin on March 23, 1965. She graduated from Hendersonville High School in June 1983. The following fall she entered The University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. In August 1986, Ms. Holtermann was appointed by the Department of Broadcasting to oversee the underwriting and promotional activities of the University of Tennessee's campus radio station, WUTK-FM. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Broadcast Management in March 1988.

In the fall of 1988, she entered graduate school at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville and was employed by the Department of Broadcasting as Promotion Director of WUTK-FM and WUTK-AM. She was offered a Graduate Assistantship from the Department of Broadcasting in August 1989 and was assigned to the promotional and underwriting endeavors of WUTK-FM. Ms. Holtermann was awarded the degree in August 1992.