

RADIO IN 1963

A Year of Promise, Flux and Failure

By MARTY LOKEN

The year has been another one of flux for many Seattle radio stations. Some have prospered. Some altered their formats. Some have been newly formed. Others, in this saturation-point market, have fallen by the wayside.

The earliest alteration of the year came about in April, when KAYO-AM, until then an affiliate of the Mutual Broadcasting System, became "Country KAYO"—a full-blown country-Western outlet. The move, as foreseen, proved to be the best thing (financially) that has happened to the embattled rock-'n'-roll station.

Shortly after the KAYO switch, the team of Mark Goodson and Bill Todman purchased another rocker, KOL AM-FM. Under new management, the station has upgraded its programming (both music and news) considerably.

Another major change hit KGMJ-FM, formerly an all-classic Heritage-network affiliate, which was merged with KIXI-AM to form a simulcast of the latter station. KIXI, as always, airs middle-of-the-road and semi-classical tunes.

KIRO Television and Radio and KTW-AM also were sold during 1963, but no major changes are expected at either camp for some time.

Two new radio outlets, KREN-AM and KBVU-AM, have joined the ranks recently; the first in Renton and the second in Bellevue. KREN is a daylight-only station on 1420 kc., and KBVU is heard on 1540 kc.

KBVU has billed itself as "The Lively Arts" station and, as such, has an ambitious, wide-ranging format planned.

Some final alterations in Seattle's radio scene included the silencing in December of KZAM-FM, a Negro-oriented rhythm and blues outlet, and the name change of KNBX-AM to KBLE-AM last Tuesday. As KBLE ("Cable"), the station will make only one significant change—the addition of an FM band early in 1964.

Now that we have briefly covered the businesslike status-quo end of radio in 1963, let us look at the more encouraging programs aired during the period.

In the area of special programming, some of the finest offerings were heard on the FM stations. And of the FM outlets, many stimulating broadcasts were presented on KING-FM, KLSN-FM and KRAB-FM.

Some of the more refreshing shows heard in 1963 on KING-FM were, for instance, Jazz from the Penthouse, broadcast live and direct from the local night spot; Toscanini—Man Behind the Legend, from N. B. C.; "The Bomb," a special B. B. C. study of possible nuclear attack, and "Brecht on Brecht," a World Theater dramatization also from the B. B. C.

These were all fine offerings, but KING-FM's pride and joy was the third annual World Festival Day, a 16-hour marathon of concert music recorded at the major European festivals of 1963.

KLSN-FM, along with 44 other member stations of the coast-to-coast QXR Network, made broadcasting history in March with the premiere of "Stereo Drama," which did a remarkable job of blending good sound and good drama in one package. The opening play, "The Turn of a Screw," starred Agnes Moorhead. Subsequent offerings featured such players as Peter Ustinov, Joseph Cotten, Cyril Ritchard, Dina Merrill and others.

Another high-rating KLSN program, the Boston Symphony Orchestra series, began in late May. The outstanding orchestra is under the baton of Arthur Fiedler, who has become as familiar a figure to Bostonians as the Old North Church.

We could not hope to condense KRAB-FM's kaleidoscopic broadcasts into one, short paragraph: Let it suffice to say that KRAB has, on occasion, turned out some fascinating commentaries, provocative panel discussions, and interesting (offbeat) musical programs in its first year of listener-supported operation.