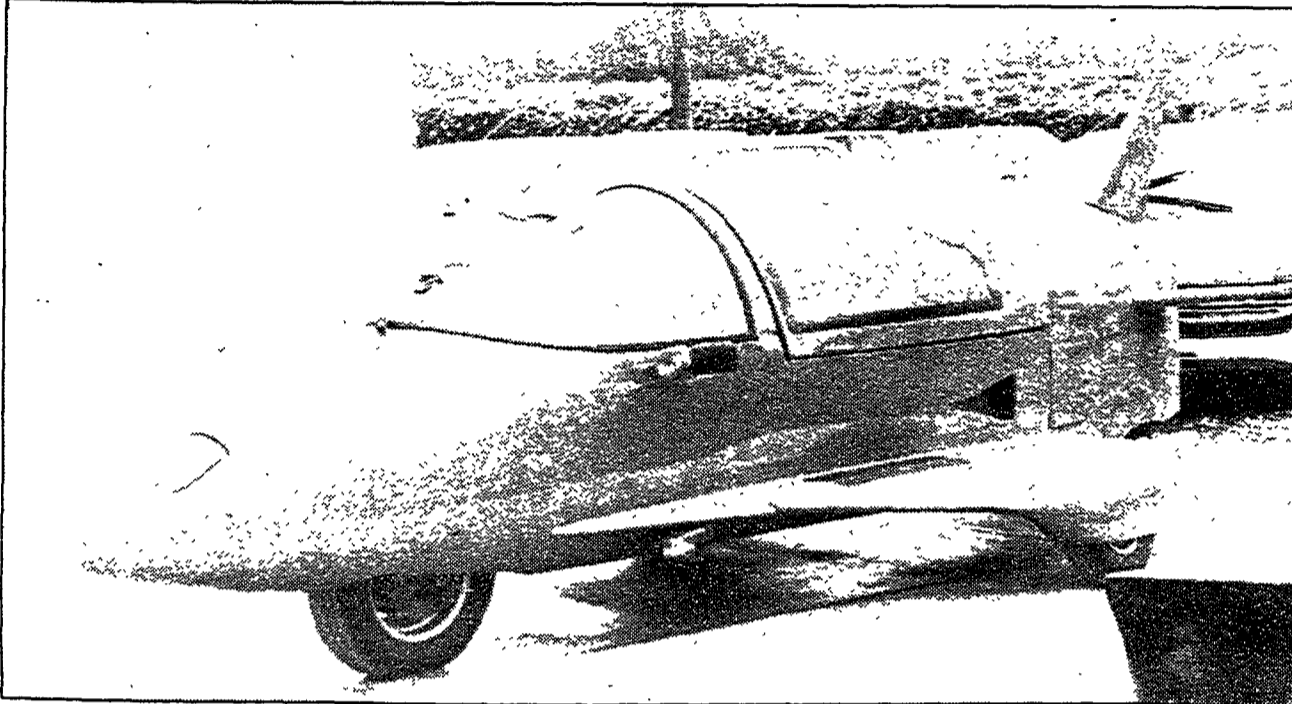


Entertainment

New Radio Station Blasts Onto The Erie Airwaves

Rocket 101 enjoys early success



ROCKET CAR - This futuristic symbol of Rocket 101 may just be a Honda in disguise but it typifies the aggressive approach Erie's newest radio station is taking.

by Joe Williams
Collegian Staff Writer

Something new happened to Erie radio this summer.

Rocket 101 (WRKT 100.9) has blasted onto the local airwaves with a new sound and format for Erie.

Rick Rambaldo, owner and station manager, purchased the North East country music station WHYP last December and set out to carve himself a niche in the radio market.

WKRT's new format is album-oriented rock.

Unlike the big three stations (WJET, K104, CLASSY 100), WRKT plays rock and roll from the 60's and 70's with less emphasis on hit music.

When WRKT first aired, it played nothing but the Beatles.

The approach was unusual, but one that seems to typify the station: It caught people's attention.

"I needed to play something 'til the equipment was technically ready for the new format," said Rambaldo. "I picked the Beatles because it's fun, everyone likes them, and it would help make the transition."

In its first month with the new format, WRKT played music with no commercials - also unusual.

"When you're a new station, you owe something to the listener," said Rambaldo. "It was a gift to the listener."

Rambaldo picked Erie for a station because "Erie is under radioed" he said, "It could support seven or eight more FM stations."

The trend in radio is microcasting as opposed to broadcasting, most experts say. In microcasting, each station has its own narrow format, aimed at a specific audience.

This is WRKT's approach. This could effect the formats of Erie's other stations, which aim for broader audiences.

"Response has been better than planned" said Rambaldo, speaking of the audience and advertisers. The target audience was the 30 to 40 age group but WRKT has picked up listeners in their teens, 20s, as well as listeners over 40.

A quick survey of Behrend students seems to be positive for WRKT. Many who have heard the station like it because it plays classic rock, doesn't over-play any one song and generally appeals to their tastes.

"It's a good station. It plays a lot of the music I like, and stays away from the commercial stuff," said one student.

The renovations at WRKT

include work on the building, installing state of the art recording and broadcasting equipment, and construction of a 500 foot tower.

One of the most unique features of the station is the computer generated playlist. Kris Phillips, program director for the station designed the software, which he sells to other stations around the country.

Phillips puts the music information into the computer, which is categorized by artist, song, and tempo. The computer takes the information and makes up a new playlist every day. This gives WRKT its "No Repeat Workday" feature, which promises no repeats from nine to five, Monday Through Friday.

At present, WRKT is simulcasting on AM 1530, which will have its own format in 30 to 45 days.

Rambaldo, who is from Cleveland, has worked in broadcast communications for 16 years, first at WHK Radio in Cleveland, then in 1980 became general manager of TV station WUHF in Rochester.

Rambaldo's talents and experience should bring more new ideas to Erie Radio. The audience's reaction to his work so far will show in next January's ratings.

Entertainment Briefs

Prince Set For World Tour

Prince will begin a world tour to support his "Batman" soundtrack in February. The seven month tour will cover the United States, Japan and Europe.

Springsteen Donates Royalties

Bruce Springsteen recently presented Amnesty International with over \$206,000 in royalties from his EP "Chimes of Freedom."

New Dylan Hits Stores

Bob Dylan has just released "Oh Mercy," which was recorded in New Orleans and produced by Daniel Lanois ("The Joshua Tree.")

Mozart's Hair Auctioned

An authenticated lock of brown hair from the head of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart recently fetched over \$17,700 at a London auction. The sample was the first specimen offered for sale in sixty years.

Top Five Albums

1. Prince- "Batman"
2. Fine Young Cannibals- "The Raw and the Cooked"
3. Beastie Boys- "Paul's Boutique"
4. Richard Marx- "Repeat Offender"
5. Gloria Estafan and Miami Sound Machine- "Cuts Both Ways"

Top Five Paperbacks

1. Yukon Ho! , by Bill Watterson
2. Wildlife Preserves, by Gary Larson
3. Chaos, by James Gleick
4. Batman, by Craig Shaw Gardner
5. The Cardinal of the Kremlin, by Tom Clancy

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