

Las Vegas Radio Croons on the Brunswick Airwaves

By Kathy Carson

Tucked away on a small road in Brunswick is a little piece of Las Vegas. WTRI (1520 am) is a 17,000-watt, dawn-to-dusk radio station broadcasting a “Vegas format,” which co-owner Buddy Rizer says is a style of music based on what Las Vegas was around the time of the Rat Pack—Frank and Dean and the gang.

“It’s a very style-driven format as opposed to an era-driven format. I just think the music is so cool,” says Rizer, who created the play list. This means that besides Ol’ Blue Eyes and The Velvet Fog, listeners are serenaded by newer artists such as Michael Buble and Diana Krall.

Rizer says that the idea for the format struck him when he and co-owner Marty Sheehan were executives at Clear Channel Communications, one of the nation’s largest radio companies. They decided that the atmosphere wasn’t for them, and when the opportunity came to purchase the station in Brunswick, Rizer saw it as providence. “I’m from this area,” says Rizer, “and it seemed like a great opportunity for a station that served both Frederick and Loudoun Counties.”

This includes broadcasting news about community events and publishing a monthly newspaper, *The Catoctin Valley Crier*. Rizer thinks that’s why they have such loyal listeners. “We’re more active in the community, and we’ve been very encouraged by the response from the audience. Thirty-five-plus is who we focus on, which I think is an audience that’s completely underserved,” he says.

Tom Taylor is editor of the trade magazine *Inside Radio*, and has been involved in the radio industry for about 30 years. He says that WTRI is unique on a number of levels. “Buddy has a station that people will remember. There’s something that’s still very cool about [artists like] Dean Martin,” Taylor says. “You choose a radio station

based on what you want your mood to be, and this station has a definite vibe.”

Taylor says that stations such as WTRI are not so much about the music, but about the lifestyle associated with the music. As updated “adult standards” format, “it appeals to listeners who weren’t alive back then, and reaches out to people who remember,” he says.

“Every market, community, and owner is different,” he says. “Radio is still very much a local format. It might work in one market, not another.”

So far, it seems to be working in Brunswick. ✦

