

KHIIH Promos Kindle Denver's Classic Rock Scene

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DENVER There's a lot of debate over which songs fit the classic rock mold. Ultimately, most classic rock stations like to let their listeners make that decision, and KHIIH here has found a unique way of doing just that—plus generating talk in the marketplace at the same time.

On Nov. 23, KHIIH offered \$50 to any listener who heard a song on the station that he did not feel was classic rock.

According to station manager Keith James, KHIIH received responses from more than 300 listeners, 275 of whom were paid \$50. The remainder did not meet the age and postal deadlines set forth in the full-page print ad announcing the promotion.

"We want to get people to notice and get involved with KHIIH," says James. "This campaign has

been very effective in doing that." In recent weeks, the local press has paid more attention to KHIIH and its series of promotional ads, and competing album rock outlets here have also taken notice.

Jo Meyers, morning announcer for KAZY-FM read KHIIH's ad copy on the air. Meanwhile, KBPI personalities poked fun at KHIIH by dubbing it K-CRY. "They thought it was a desperation move," says James. "One announcer said it showed that we were on the verge of bankruptcy, which is ridiculous."

Since making its debut in October 1986, KHIIH has consistently

dropped in the Arbitron ratings. The station achieved a 4.3, 12-plus overall share in its first book (in the winter of 1987), but dropped to a 2.0 in Denver's crowded, 38-station market by the 1987 summer ratings. James says the changes the station has made as a result of

listener feedback should put the station back in the top 10 soon. "This radio station sounds a lot different than when it first came out," says James. "It's a lot more targeted."

'We want to get people to notice and get involved with KHIIH. This campaign has done that'

As a result of the \$50 promotion, KHIIH has removed three songs from its playlist—"Twistin' The Night Away" by Rod Stewart, "Crystal Blue Persuasion" by Tommy James & the Shondells, and "Mrs. Robinson" by Simon & Garfunkel. Although all three

were often mentioned by listeners as not being classic rock, they were not necessarily the songs mentioned most often. "We picked three songs we felt we could live without," says James.

Denver audiences have come to expect eye-catching marketing campaigns from KHIIH. Several months ago, KHIIH began a series of full-page ads with copy reading, "We were flattered, but now we're damn mad!" The ad accused a variety of Denver's album rock and AC stations of borrowing KHIIH's self-described, classic-rock'n'roll-position statement but then programming "some wimp tunes," "some stupid oldies," "heavy metal," or "that weird new age stuff."

Next came another full-page ad, this one proclaiming, "We screwed up." That statement was in reference to KHIIH's use of a Seattle station's playlist as a basis for KHIIH's format. "Seattle's tastes are a little harder," says James.

"They might play Aerosmith, whereas we won't." Each ad featured James' face emoting shame, anger, or elation.

James is optimistic about the future of KHIIH and says the current format is considerably more fo-

cused than previous ones. "When we first came out," he says, "we were playing everything from Bill Haley & the Comets to the real hard Led Zeppelin, sometimes back-to-back." KHIIH's emphasis is now on album rock dating from the mid-'60s to the present. Ninety percent of KHIIH's music is played direct from compact disks.