Radio

On October 8, Hitradio jingles were heard on 103.3 MHz for the first time as WEEI-FM converted itself to a new Top 40 format. Hitradio replaced five years of adult contemporary soft rock and will hopefully turn around a year of sliding Arbitron ratings. Until the start of the month our FM stations in the Boston area had been playing soft rock: WYBF, WOR, WEEI, and a relative newcomer to the field, WMEZ. Since Magic 106 began broadcasting, the audience divided, lowering WEEI's Arbitron share from a 4 in the fall to a 2.8 this past summer.

Boston's number one radio station, WXXS-FM (Kiss 108), broadcasts with an urban contemporary format. Many of the other top-ranking stations use an album-oriented rock format. Hitradio is a Top 40 format, a style which has not been seen in the Boston area since WYBF abandoned it a few years ago. Two CBS-FM stations using a hard but more energetic Hot Hits format, WCAU Philadelphia and WBIM Chicago, have done exceedingly well in their areas. WBIM has risen to number 3 among the 18-34 age group since going on the air in April. Although WEEI had a loyal group of listeners, the numbers were not there and a gradual change toward the new format began a few months ago. David Austin, General Manager of WEEI, told us that people who are looking for more lively music, they no longer wish to be mellowed out. Top 40 is providing that sort of music, and with great variety.

For the time, WEEI will be strictly formatted, playing only songs cut since 1977, the majority of which will be current hits. The disc jockeys don't have too much freedom, but their banter has not been too totally restricted. The line-up has Michael Karlin (formerly of WBCN) joining Bill Smith for the morning, Alex Stone, from Orlando's WLOF, has taken the evening slot. Dick Gartan in the afternoon, Hillary Stevens after midnight, and a midday DJ to be announced this week round off the group.

The jocks aren't obnoxious — they do not talk over the first and last thirty seconds of each song. Unfortunately, they usually don't bother announcing the title and artist. Though they do have the charts, there is no call-out of the top ten.

Stuart Gilbert

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