

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

SIBILA VARGAS, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Records were already relics at radio stations when that Madonna single first hit the air waves, but recently the D.J.s are also disappearing. In their place, there's JACK.

COGAN: 93.1 JACK-FM: Playing what we want.

VARGAS: JACK's no D.J. JACK's not even a person. It's what industry observers are calling the fastest growing radio format to debut in the past decade.

JACK was born in Vancouver, British Columbia with no D.J., just a cast of pre-recorded voice-overs and a much larger play list than most commercial radio formats.

(SINGING)

With an eclectic sound ranging from The Pet Shop Boys to the Pointer Sisters, Steeley Dan to Sugar Ray, tried and true hit music from the 1970s through the 90s.

Rick Dees, who hosts a national-syndicated weekly top-40 radio show, appreciates the competition's variety.

RICK DEES, RADIO PERSONALITY: People used to come up to me and say, "Hey, Dees, you play the same ten songs over and over and over," and I used to have to say, "No. No. No. It's the same nine songs over and over." So, long live JACK.

VARGAS: JACK's success in Canada has inspired stations in the states from New York to L.A., Philadelphia to Dallas, Chicago to Seattle, to adopt JACK's anything-goes approach to music. In Los Angeles, KCBF F.M., recently segue from classic rock, to JACK F.M. and program director, Kevin Weatherly, insists despite the seemingly random nature of its sound, there's a method in the madness.

KEVIN WEATHERLY, PROGRAM DIRECTOR: You can hear anything at any time, but you know, we -- you know, there's a lot of time-thought put into the flow and making sure that we're hitting different genres, different decades.

VARGAS (on camera): The development of JACK F.M. is a reflection of the radio audience that's increasingly turned to other sources for music: The Internet, satellite radio and the ever-popular iPod, with some stations telling listeners they're like you iPod on shuffle.

WEATHERLY: It's not meant to be arrogant or to come off as, "Hey, this is my little radio station. I'm playing what I want." That's insane. You know, the idea at the end of the day, is to get ratings.

VARGAS (voice-over): While JACK's debut in Los Angeles made it the market's top-rated station for its target demographic, elsewhere, listeners are less enthusiastic.

(SINGING)

In New York, where JACK replaced WCBS F.M.'s oldies format in June,

the response was outrage. Their cousin is legendary radio personality, "Cousin" Brucie Morrow, one of the many D.J.s who was fired when JACK came to town.

"COUSIN" BRUCIE MORROW, RADIO PERSONALITY: You see, when radio's done properly, it has emotion. It's not bland. It's not boring. It's not in-your-face, as some of these formats are, like this JACK or Mel or Bob or Bill or Brucie -- whatever they're calling the format. Radio has to have the emotion. It has to have the ability to communicate. When you don't communicate, you don't have radio.

WEATHERLY: All I know is in the first three months with no jocks, it's come on and had a pretty good impact on a lot of established personalities in the market.

COGAN: 95.5 KLOS: Playing Southern California's best classic rock.

VARGAS: Uncle Joe Benson is one of those personalities unceremoniously told to hang up his headphones when JACK hit Los Angeles.

UNCLE JOE BENSON, RADIO PERSONALITY: JACK and all its off-shoots are a response to management not having a clue as to how to reach an audience.

WEATHERLY: Mindless chatter that's not compelling or entertaining is an irritant and we wanted to come on and reduce the amount of irritants. At the same time, we're not void of personality.

COGAN: If you've got no request, we've got no problems.

VARGAS: JACK's personality is actually created by writers and producers and given voice by Howard Cogan, who prefers to remain in the shadows behind the microphone.

HOWARD COGAN, VOICE-OVER ARTIST: Who is JACK? He's a charterer. He's not the life of the party, but he's the guy talking about the life of party or making fun of the life of the party. I think we just -- we add a little flavor. You know, come for the music and stay for the smart-ass comments.

BENSON: Come back in six months or a year. See how many JACK stations are still around then.

COGAN: JACK F.M.: Resistance is futile.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

ZAHN: Let's see. That was Sibila Vargas reporting. You will surely recognize my next guest, Micky Dolenz of a former member of the group The Monkees, which you know, he's the third one over there, right? I can't see so well at this angle. What you may not know is he was also the former morning D.J. of New York's WCBS F.M., which switched to the JACK format.

Good to see you, Micky. So, we should make it clear that you had a big party to celebrate your 100th broadcast and then you got fired because JACK came to town. That had to sting. Did it?

MICKY DOLENZ, FORMER MONKEE: Not really. No. I'm not -- I wasn't a professional radio man for the last 40 years. I was brought in as a personality. I had a great time. I have no regrets. I meant a lot of wonderful people and had a lot of fun doing the show. I didn't like getting up at 4:30 in the morning...

ZAHN: No. Of course, no one does.

DOLENZ: But I had...

ZAHN: But that's certainly isn't what your compatriots are saying. You have guys who've been in the business -- I mean, you're lucky because you have other outlets to rely upon financially. These D.J.s who spent 30, 40 years of their life doing this think that -- they view themselves as reducing an irritant, as one support referred to.

DOLENZ: No. Of course not. That's a little harsh and of course in its very early days, you know, Chow and Lye (ph) back in 1950, was asked what he thought the effect of the French Revolution would have and he said it's too soon to tell and I think that, that's -- there is a lot of truth in that here.

This is -- JACK's only been around about a year. I've had dinner parties longer than a year. It's very early days. It's a novelty still and you know, we are a country and a nation and a civilization that loves our novelties for just a little while and then all of a sudden, something else comes along. It's way, way too early to see if this is going to really catch on and stay and have legs, as we say.

ZAHN: But you're a guy who grew up on radio and I'm just curious if you think what America really wants -- this younger demographic that everybody seems to be going after wants to just listen to a jukebox or do they want a personality driving it?

DOLENZ: Well, one of things that drove this -- one of the things that drove this thing with JACK is what was mentioned earlier, is that there are so many other ways to get your music now. This is very similar to what the television industry went through back 20, 25, 30 years ago, with cable television.

Funnily (sic) radio, being an earlier broadcast medium than television, never went through that kind of transition. It's always been, up until very recently, a broadcast medium. It was the only way you get radio was through broadcast -- terrestrial radio as they say.

But then, satellite radio came along and iPods and the ability to be your own disc jockey; to go and burn your own disc and have it with you anywhere, any time, any place and basically play your own music. So, the entire industry is being shook up by the fact that there are other ways to get your music. I have 30 or 40 channels on my television at home...

ZAHN: Sure.

DOLENZ: ... That I plan -- and I can turn on oldies. I can put on the

'50s or the '60s or the '70s or the '80s or the '90s or just one week in 1968.

ZAHN: Sure, but Micky, you know we all know that you've got to change to stay relevant, but the bottom line in the 25 seconds we have left: Do you think based on this latest development, radio as we once knew it five years ago is dead?

DOLENZ: No, I don't think so. I think there will be even more diversity as there is on television. This is like saying was broadcast television dead when cable came along? No. I don't.

I think that it's going to be much more narrow-casting. There's going to be stations and satellite stations for everybody in every possible taste with disc jockeys, without Disc Jockeys; with music, without music. All kinds of different possibilities. I think -- and I don't mind JACK. I like a lot of music they were playing, as a matter of fact. And by the way, it does have a disc jockey. It has that guy's voice, which is a personality.

ZAHN: Well, you sound -- that was a politivity (sic) answer. Maybe you'll end up getting another one of those D.J. jobs again. Micky Dolenz, thanks for joining us tonight. Good luck to you.

DOLENZ: Not at 4:30 in the morning. ZAHN: Yes. You don't want that. Thanks, you all, for joining us tonight. We'll be back same time, same place tomorrow night. Good night.