

There'll be a new morning man and Rob-O will team with Bruce Jacobson as WROV puts spotlight on its DJs

By JEFF DeBELL
TV/radio writer

After nine years of arising at 4 a.m. to go on the air at 6, WROV's Rob O'Brady can start sleeping in on weekday mornings.

Beginning Wednesday, the well-known DJ will have not only a new air shift, but a partner.

He and Bruce Jacobson, who's currently the evening DJ, will do a tandem act for WROV weekday afternoons from 3 to 7.

It's all part of a plan to increase the AM station's emphasis on personalities and entertainment.

A new announcer named Steve McFarland will succeed O'Brady on the morning shift starting Wednesday, and Larry Bly and Laban Johnson, who've attained a considerable following through various television, radio and theatrical enterprises, will do a show together three Saturday afternoons per month.

"We're going back to what we do well," said Burt Levine, the station's owner and manager. "We're trying to make radio the exciting show business that it used to be. We're going to use radio's unique ability to stir the imagination as a theater of the mind."



Steve McFarland

He'll be the early riser at WROV

In the 1960s and early 1970s, WROV was known for such personalities as Fred Frelantz, Jack Fisher and Don Alexander. Levine said the latest changes reflect a similar approach to local broadcasting.

"When you've got good talent and

they've proven themselves," he said, "let them do more."

Along with the other changes, WROV is re-tuning its musical emphasis.

"Music overall is changing," said assistant program director Matt Eakle, "and we are responding to that. Music of the 1980s has more of a universal appeal. Rock, pop, mellow and dance are merging."

Eakle cited Culture Club and the Eurythmics as examples of the contemporary "mass appeal" groups whose works the station is playing.

WROV will continue to play oldies, but has already begun to de-emphasize them slightly.

Eakle said the ratio of new songs to oldies is about 60-40, whereas it used to be the other way around. On weekends, he said, the playlist will be about half oldies.

O'Brady said he and Jacobson will be "a little more outrageous than either of us has ever been individually and maybe more than anyone has ever been on radio in Roanoke."

Their show will be more "off the wall" than prepared, he said. "We're gonna rely quite a bit on our long-standing friendship and our knowledge of each other. I bring with me my 18 years of experience, but also 18 years of encumbrances, of the rules and regulations of the business of rock 'n' roll radio. Bruce comes unencumbered, so he really is a breath of fresh air."

O'Brady is approaching his 10th anniversary with WROV. He has been the early morning man nine of those years, but he said it's no easier to get up at 4 a.m. now that it was when he started.

"Getting up is a terrible way to begin the day no matter when you do it," he said.