

# March 17: A Day Of Radio Infamy

Shannon hangs out in Westwood One's Building No. 2, a nondescript structure from the outside but as new as his Porsche on the inside. There is a huge warehouse-like room loaded with hundreds of boxes stacked on shelves. Off the side, down a little hideaway hallway is Shannon's "war room."

"I'm going crazy," Shannon said in an interview just prior to The Debut. "I've been off the air for a month." The rock and roll animal was having withdrawal.

He has decided on his staff, ignoring the boxes and boxes filled with resumes and audio checks sent in from deejays who want to work with Shannon in L.A. The pile includes a tape from the kid who played Danny on the old TV show, "The Partridge Family." He didn't get a job with Shannon either.

His crew is new to L.A., snapping the radio musical chairs game that has kept jocks hopping from one station to another since Marconi. Shannon wanted fresh blood for his new station. One thing he knows for sure, there will be no repeat of his New York success in Los Angeles.

"Guarantee that won't happen here," he said. "It's not our game plan. The overall quality of radio in L.A. is pretty good. The guys in the morning at KLOS (95.5 FM) Mark and Brian, are going to be a factor. Power 106 (KPWR 105.9 FM) is one of the most skillfully engineered stations in the United States. KIIS (102.7 FM) is an institution spearheaded by Rick Dees. People like to say he's lazy and tired right now but I don't hear any of it when I listen to the station."

Dees can afford to be lazy. He reportedly makes \$2 million a year, twice Shannon's paycheck, for running the Number One morning show in town. He's done it for six years, the same as Shannon in New York. And he doesn't appear to be sweating Shannon's debut.

Through spokesmen, Dees had only this to say about his new rival's arrival: "I love to make people laugh and I spend all my time doing it," and earlier, "I don't know why Scott is so concerned about me. I only have seven listeners and one is sick." Nonchalant or not, KIIS is sponsoring a million-dollar giveaway promotion to blunt the Pirate's sword.

Over at Power 106, the station recently ran a contest for a new name for Jay Thomas' morning show. They picked the Power 106 Morning Zoo, with Shannon most definitely in mind. Thomas owns the copyright.

"I'm going to crush him like a grape," Thomas said, "like we'll crush the rest. I don't think he'll have any impact. Rick Dees is in real trouble. And he's a guy who doesn't need any more trouble."

In the meantime, Shannon continues researching and planning. "Our battleplan is far from being done. L.A. is the most difficult market in the country to program because of all the lifestyle differences. There are so many different pockets of culture, different lifestyles, different heritages."

One thing Shannon guaranteed was that his station would sound fresh. "It will be different than anything else on the air, not only in L.A., but in the country," Shannon pledged. He didn't lie.

"Pirate Radio" sounds like its name: punctuation between cuts includes fuzz, feedback and "tests," authentic-sounding "emergency broadcast system" announcements. The show sounds like it's coming from the bowels of a rusty Liberian freighter just outside the legal limits. Shannon has plugged in more obscure artists to make a more esoteric mix, and is definitely not handcuffed by the charts. One listener called the sound "European."

There was one other major difference from the competition: no commercials. The new sales staff is in place and in the marketplace; how long it will be before the fruits of their labor make air is up to Shannon and he isn't revealing his plans.

The gunfire across the dial is just beginning. The smoke won't really clear and the casualties can't be counted until the first book is on the table. But this much is certain: Shannon is holding true to form by not holding true to form. And the more he deviates, the more things stay the same: he wins.

**F**irst, in Los Angeles you gotta have wheels. On this bright and sunny Southern California day, Shannon slipped away before lunch, popped over to the auto lot, picked out his \$75,000 black convertible Porsche turbo, and drove off the lot in 37 minutes. He parks it next to Pattiz' red Ferrari.

"Now I'm a California dude," Shannon

said, posing by the shiny new toy outside his modest office at Westwood One. "It doesn't take me long to make decisions."

Indeed.

It took him a little longer to pick out his new home by the beach in Santa Monica. Unlike the

Porsche, he had to consult his wife before that purchase.

—MS

