



EastWest Communications Inc.

P.O. Box 8488
The Woodlands, Texas 77387
(713) 363-4939
Pager (713) 404-0245

Experimental Station KA2XZE

Experiment with

Riotious Crowd Control

April 15, 16 & 17, 1996

SUMMARY:

In an effort to determine if on-site broadcasting could control a riotious, unruly crowd, a concert by a group with a past history of riots at their concerts was determined to be the most important experiment. The concert chosen, in order to prove the concept, was the groups largest concert ever, and their first to be a 3 day event.

The scene was upstate New York, on Plattsburg Air Force Base (decommissioned), where a crowd of 75,000 spent two to three days with the majority camped out on the grounds. The music, jazz -rock, attracted a following that was a challenge to our experiment.

The broadcast was performed on 88.9 MHz. FM from a height of 55 feet (the back stage left tower). Station on-air time was continuous from Thursday noon until Sunday morning at 2 am. In an effort to mix in with the crowd, production of the broadcast was performed by the concert group.

The crowd's perception was the musical group was speaking to them from this station. As messages were issued, they were from their own favorite musicians, not the New York State Police. In reality, the New York State Police called each time there was a problem or directions to the public, and we instantly responded with the desired messages.

Signs were posted on the Interstate prior to the exit to tune to "Phish Radio on 88.9 FM" since the band's name was Phish. In addition, banner towing aircraft flew over the campsite with signage indicating the same, paid by the concert promoters.

As the days and nights wore on, the music was loud, and the crowd was even louder, but there was absolutely no trouble at the event.

The reasons for the large crowd's good behavior are considered to be:

- ◆ Those who could not afford gate admission, usually those who would rush the gates to get in, could hear the concert over the station.
- ◆ Use of standard FM frequencies allowed incoming motorists to receive directions and instructional messages prior to arrival, a very important factor in directing the crowds to the right places and allow for immediate correction of unforeseen spectator activities (such as camping in a hazardous waste area).
- ◆ The campers learned the day before the event started that the station was on the air, and throughout the parking lot and camp grounds the same station was heard on car radios. Even those without radios had no trouble hearing the station since their neighbors insured the sound was loud, producing several "remote" public address systems miles from the concert.
- ◆ The announcements and correction to the public misbehavior was from their favorite group, not perceived to be from the police.
- ◆ The announcements were rapid, in tune to the latest developments, thereby annulling rumors (rumors are always at such events, and they lead to crowd reaction in a negative manner).

CONCLUSION:

It is thereby concluded, by the New York State Police as well as the concert promoters, that the broadcast was exceptional useful in the concert being peaceful. It is also to be concluded such magnitude of success is not possible unless the broadcast is received on the standard FM radio. The most critical factor is for those outside the gate to hear the concert, eliminating the incentive to "crash" the gate. The risk to this concept for the promoter is the potential loss of gate revenue, but this event proved that was not a valid concern.

Coverage needs to extend approximately five miles to allow road directions as directed and updated by the police, as well as keeping the crowd calmer as they depart in the heavy traffic.

CHALLENGES:

- ◆ **The greatest challenge faced by the station was the decision to allow the promoter to program the station. It allowed for the acceptance deemed critical to the experiment, but also created our biggest problems.**
- ◆ **Since each announcer brought their own music tapes, records and CDs, constant monitoring and correction was required. Proper monitoring is impossible prior to broadcast, and that experience will not be repeated.**
- ◆ **The type of individual the promoters used to announce, contrary to prior agreements, were not experienced radio announcers, but "friends" who were unappropriate and challenging to keep in line for a good clean on-air station.**
- ◆ **Cooperation with the service by the Air Base and some other organizations was excellent, but indirect through the concert promoter's office. The State Police had direct contact through a telephone in the temporary studio.**

SUMMARY:

After reflecting on the experiment, we summarize as follows:

It is very possible to control a crowd that is known to be historically uncontrollable, but wise decisions have to be made and cooperation with the concert promoter is required. If the promoter had not allowed the concert to be broadcast (which proved not to deminish their gate attendance), the story may have not had such a successful conclusion.

We were very pleased with the outcome, but also aware of the many factors that have to be considered in such an endeavor. To be effective, the coverage must cover the approach avenues to be received over car radios. The station must be on the standard FM band to allow reception by all concerned, over the numerous campgrounds in the area, to cease the gate-crashing experience.

Though it is possible to perform the service on other discreet frequencies that use special receivers, the effectiveness in this type of event would most likely prove crowd control ineffective. As performed at this event, there is no question that the service was extremely effective.