

Raycom Entertainment's 'Elvis' Hit High Point

All the hoopla surrounding the 10th anniversary of Elvis Presley's death is winding down, but Raycom Inc. of Charlotte is still sky high.

The reason?

The company's first nonsports program, "Elvis's Graceland," acquired and distributed by the company's new Raycom Entertainment division, was a smash. Raycom sold it to 163 stations, including 110 network affiliates, and reached 92% of the nation's television markets.

"That's extremely high for a syndicated program," said Doug Verb, director of information and promotion at Raycom. "It's a tremendous success, especially because it was our first effort."

Raycom is the largest independent producer of sports programs in the nation. Last year, the company covered more than 200 athletic events, including six basketball conferences (including the Atlantic Coast Conference), Southwest Conference football, the Liberty Bowl, the All-American Bowl and the Kick-Off Classic.

"There are few places for growth in sports programming," Verb said. "Raycom is an entrepreneurial company. This was a good area to move into."

The show was made by the Graceland estate, with Priscilla Presley as the tour guide through Presley's Memphis mansion. It has aired on the Showtime cable channel.

Verb said Peter Lenz, the executive producer of Raycom Entertainment, heard about the special and obtained national rights. Raycom then began lining up stations and sponsors. Stations received a hot property and the opportunity to place six local commercials in the program. Raycom retained the profits from sales of six commercial spots to national advertisers.

Profits, which remain undetermined until ratings are tallied, will be split between Raycom and the Graceland estate, Verb said.

Encouraged by the success of "Elvis's Graceland," Raycom is now scouting at least four special it can distribute in 1988, as well as a weekly program. Once they are located, Raycom will handle them the same way, delivering a complete package of programming with national advertising.

"This is going to be one of our big areas for growth," Verb promised.

WDAV's New Man



TV/Radio

Jeff Borden

you're never swamped with applicants," said WDAV station manager John Clark. "To be effective, you need a good on-air presence, a deep knowledge of classical music and a familiarity with computers. Richard excels in all those areas. He's bright and he's knowledgeable."

Ruotolo, a graduate of Oberlin College, was most recently a programmer and announcer at WUNC radio in Chapel Hill. He was also the music director at Chapel Hill High School and has played with the N.C. Symphony Orchestra.

For now, Ruotolo is hosting the morning program on WDAV while announcer Heidi Schultz is on vacation. On Aug. 31, he'll move to his regular 3 to 6 p.m. shift. Ruotolo also will host the station's series of Charlotte Symphony Orchestra concerts, starting at 8 p.m. Sept. 3.

"It was a real honor to be invited here," Ruotolo said. "This is a beautiful setup with a hungry bunch of young staffers."

At a popular music station, a music director sifts through the dozens of new releases each week, watches the record charts and studies research on individual songs with the goal of choosing the songs the public most wants to hear. Though most of the music

played on WDAV is hundreds of years old, Ruotolo said his job isn't too different from his commercial counterparts.

"There's a slightly different emphasis," he said. "For instance, there's a real burgeoning interest over the past few years in baroque performance practice. We try to obtain records that will reflect and meet the demands of our listeners for that kind of music."

Ruotolo replaces Louis Weiner, who will continue to work part-time at the station as host of the station's opera series. Clark said Weiner is "pursuing a new occupation in the private sector."

Dollar Nominated

Bill Dollar, the morning announcer at WSOC (103 FM), is one of six large market disc jockeys nominated for 1987 Broadcast Personality of the Year by the Country Music Association. The winner will be announced at the CMA Awards show Oct. 12.

Nominees were selected in two rounds of voting by other country

radio personalities. An anonymous panel of judges will select the winner based on "air checks" from the various radio shows.

"It's his first time as a nominee," said WSOC program director Paul Johnson. "Since the first two rounds are voted by peers, it seems that people have finally noticed Bill Dollar's performance over the past six years. He is the guy who knocked off Robert Murphy (formerly the top-rated jock at WROQ and now a Chicago radio personality). It takes time to be recognized as a genuine star in this format."

Another reason Dollar may have been noticed, Johnson said, is because of general manager Gregg Lindahl, who took the job last November after working several years for the Opryland radio stations. Lindahl's reputation may have helped focus attention on WSOC, Johnson said.

The other jocks in the running work for stations in Salt Lake City, Norfolk, Atlanta, San Antonio and Phoenix.