

## EMMIS-ST. LOUIS: 'Powerhouse' Cluster

Photos courtesy of Emmis-St. Louis

The greatest challenges encountered in the early days of consolidation were how and where to bring all operations of a market cluster under one roof. When Emmis Communications purchased two St. Louis stations from Zimmer Broadcasting in 1997, the Zimmer properties had 2-year-old facilities in the Westport area of the city. Emmis was faced with the task of moving those two properties in with KSHE, which was located in an annex of the renovated Union Station railroad complex in St. Louis.

"We had built a new facility for our two stations in the Westport area back in 1995," recalls Chief Engineer **Sam Caputa**. "Then, when Emmis bought us, we moved the facilities down here to the station, where we occupy the entire first floor of the Powerhouse building." The Powerhouse actually is a replica of the old Union Electric Railroad power generating station, and it formerly housed a disco and a restaurant. "It's still one of the best-attended attractions in St. Louis," says Caputa. "Half a million people come here every year."

Today, the built-out facility houses Emmis' five St. Louis FM properties, including KSHE, KPNT, KIHT, WMLL and KFTK. *Radio Ink* recently spoke with Caputa about the facility.

**INK:** How did Emmis' five stations come to be located in this building?

**CAPUTA:** The original facility was built in 1997, and the other stations were added around 2000. Then KSHE moved over here sometime in 2001. We had quite a bit of extra room at first. Back then, consolidation was right on the horizon, and we knew we would have more stations. We had three large conference rooms and three extra studios built with wiring and acoustical wall systems, but they weren't used as studios initially.

**You must have been rolling around in the place to bring in three more stations.**

It was pretty extravagant and roomy for only two stations. We have since purchased two more stations and incorporated them into the facility; and we moved KSHE — which had been in the annex building of the Union Station complex — into the place, as well. What was originally a two-station facility is now a five-station facility. We've been able to use the space efficiently to make a very



workable situation, rather than a squeezed, compromised facility. **Tell us about the Powerhouse building and some of its history.**

It had served as a dance club; then half of it became a restaurant and the other half became a business. We completely gutted it and redid it to what we have now. The building itself has quite a lot of character. Floors are on different levels, with ramps going up and down. The ceiling has many levels, and we were able to incorporate that into a design with a lot of character. No two areas in this whole facility are identical.

**How did you transform this space into what works for a Radio facility?**

Half of the disco's dance floor now is under the studios, and the other half is part of the sales bullpen. The disco booth, which overlooked the dance floor and housed all of the equipment, was a balcony conference room, and now it's our traffic department.

**Describe the layout.**

When you come upon the building, you see a main entrance to the Powerhouse building. It still has the original smokestack. The main entrance to the building has large double doors with "Powerhouse" » **36**

above them in stone. To the left is our entrance with the station logos over it. Walking into the reception area, you're in view of two air studios — one with full-glass exposure.

You first enter the technical complex — the studios, production rooms, central rack room, and programming offices. Then come the sales bullpen, sales management offices, and the fax-copier-mail area.

You can go around the other side of the building to a dedicated hallway that houses the morning show offices, business managers' offices, and a kitchen for all five stations. Engineering also is back there.

Coming around, you'll see more administrative areas for the general manager, national sales manager, national sales manager, vendor co-op department, promotions, business managers, and conference rooms.

Connecting the two halves of the first floor is a mezzanine, which has a sales bullpen for KSHE and offices for our syndication manager and our Internet department.

#### What else do you have?

We also syndicate The Steve and DC Morning Show here. The area dedicated to them includes their network control studio, an office for Steve and DC, a support staff area, and pre- and post-production facilities. We have the uplink for that on the roof.

The five FM studios operate full time, independent of the Steve and DC Network, although they are the morning show for The Mall 104.1.

#### What do you have for production?

We have seven production rooms: three main production rooms and three imaging production rooms. We also have one smaller, multiple-use production room, where we do most of the



## Emmis-St. Louis Equipment Checklist

#### Boards/consolas:

**On-Air:** Wheatstone A-6000, Logitek Numix Digital; **Production:** Wheatstone SP-48, Harrison Pro 950, Yamaha O2R

**Audio processing equipment:** Optimod 8200, Dolby 740 Spectral Processor, Orban 222A Spatial Enhancer, TC Electronics Finalizer

#### Microphones:

**On-Air:** EV RE-27; **Production:** Neuman TLM-103, Rode NT-2, Rode Broadcaster

#### Transmitter:

BE-FM35A, Harris HT30/35FM, Continental 816-R3

#### Antenna:

Combined (2 stations of 8-user system): Harris TAC-8FM Broadband CBR; Single Ended Systems (3 stations): ERI SHP-4AE (1), ERI SHP-

#### 8AC (2)

**Music software:** RCS Selector/Linker

**Remote equipment:** 450/455 MHz: Moseley 4000 Series RPU, Marti RPT Series RPU; **ISDN:** Telos Zephyr, Comrex Matrix; **Pots Codecs:** Comrex Vector, Comrex Matrix

**Telephone hybrid:** Telos 1+1, Telos One, Telos 1x6, Telos Direct Interface (10 line), Telos 1A2 Interface

**Digital workstations:** SawPlus 32, Saw Studio, Pro Tools, 360 ShortCut

**Engineering department:** Sam Caputa, Ralph Brancato, Gino Balossi, Will Callander

**Architect:** The Lawrence Group — St. Louis, MO

voicetracking. That room serves as a call-screening room for one of our live shows in the afternoon, and it's also an auxiliary production room.

In addition, there is one central rack-room facility that houses everything from the satellite equipment to microwave, audio processing, phone system, audio routing equipment and all the monitoring equipment.

#### Did you bring your old equipment to the new facility?

We incorporated almost entirely new equipment. At the time we built this place, going digital was not clear-cut; all of that was still on the fence. We chose



to go with Wheatstone, which makes what we consider very-good-quality analog consoles, and we have the Scott Studio system for our digital audio platform. That was relocated from the other facility, but it had been in service only a year.

That was our first step into digital — with the idea at that point of being entirely tapeless.

#### What architectural firm did you use, and how did they work with you to develop the facility?

Back in 1995, before Emmis was in the picture, we had hired the Lawrence Group to build the Westport facility. They did a good job for us. They had a lot of good pre-planning ideas, asking how we wanted the place set up, whether we wanted to group by station or department. They did the basic layout, the design, the overall look.

We liked what they did, so we re-hired them for this facility.

#### Would you do anything differently?

At the time we designed and built this, I don't think we would have done anything differently, because the way we wired the infrastructure — Ethernet wiring, phone wiring, audio and control wiring — were pretty much the current thing at the time. We used a lot of analog cable because we weren't quite ready to make a decision on digital. We used all-shielded Ethernet cable for the networking, and we used Cat-5 cabling for the phone system, which has allowed us to expand.

Today, we would do things a little differently, because the infrastructure — especially for the audio — might be fiber now, depending on the console system or audio routing system chosen. ☐