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## Old school rap radio station los angeles

Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Use precise geolocation data. Store and/or access information on a device. Select basic ads. Create a personalised ads profile. Select personalised ads. Apply market research to generate audience insights. Measure content performance. Develop and improve products. List of Partners (vendors) Pop quiz: Which Southern California rap concert drew the biggest audience in the last 12 months? If you said Jay-Z and Kanye West's December shows, you're close. After all, the two performed before nearly 20,000 fans during each of three nights at Staples Center. But the correct answer is Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg, who headlined before 80,000 people for two weekends at Coachella in April. Sure, many came to the desert for other acts, but Dre and Snoop's shows were absolutely packed. The L.A. gangsta rappers have become nostalgia acts; at Coachella, they mostly played old hits like "Gin and Juice" and "Nuthin' But a 'G' Thang," which came out in the early '90s. Snoop's recent albums sell poorly, and Dre's last one came out when Clinton was president, but in L.A. they're still kings. Not so their counterparts in New York: Though rap was synonymous with the city during its first years, former titans like Run-DMC and Rakim are woefully underappreciated. The man considered to have invented the genre, DJ Kool Herc, is so destitute he couldn't afford surgery for kidney stones last year. Here, though, we worship our rap forefathers — many of whom got their start on KDAY 1580 AM, a radio station that flipped the script by becoming the nation's first to play mostly hip-hop. "KDAY was the shit," Dr. Dre told writer Brian Cross, author of West Coast rap history It's Not About a Salary. "[T]hey definitely put N.W.A on the map." These days, Los Angeles still tunes in to a station called KDAY. It operates at 93.5 FM with different ownership and DJs. But as one of the few terrestrial stations specializing in hip-hop oldies, it still plays many of the same songs. And it's kicking ass. Los Angeles is the world's biggest radio market, and the station is currently 12th overall, with a 2.9 share among 18- to 34-year-olds. At any given time, on average, about 3 percent of L.A. listeners are tuning in. "We are outperforming the market," says station general manager Zeke Chaidez. Tied for 16th at this time last year, KDAY's ratings are on the ascent, despite inherent institutional disadvantages: While its competition is owned by big conglomerates, the station is independent. Its signal is so weak that it can barely be heard in much of the Valley, even as competitor Power 106 (KPWR) reaches almost all the way to Santa Barbara. "It's pretty impressive to be just outside the top 10 with a niche format, with a less-than-stellar signal, and in the biggest market in the country for radio," says Jon Miller, director of programming services for Arbitron. He speculates that the format could spread around the United States. "I think the sky's the limit. In today's media market, if something is good and compelling, the door is wide open." KDAY is making big ratings gains by playing the old gangsta rap that used to sound so menacing. The odd thing is, it no longer does. "It brings back good memories; it brings a smile to people's faces," says program director Adrian "Mr. A.D." Scott. "People used to say, 'This is bad for our kids,' but now we praise it." Adds KDAY's DJ Dense: "That's when music was fun." But wasn't that also when hip-hop supposedly could get you killed? During gangsta rap's heyday, in the late '80s and early '90s, Angelenos lived through tumult — the riots, crack cocaine and gang violence. To many, the West Coast is still synonymous with drive-by shootings, Crips and Bloods. But there's one big difference: Today, in the relative civility of modern Los Angeles, the bad old days seem downright cool. We get sentimental when we hear gangsta rap. When the sun is shining, the traffic is moving and KDAY is playing Tupac, we remember the way we were. The original KDAY specialized in hip-hop as it first gained popularity on the West Coast. Its songs were fresh. A bit too fresh, perhaps: In the late '80s, the station was annoying the hell out of some folks on the Eastside. Its idiosyncratic signal beamed out of six towers on a hill between Silver Lake and Echo Park, bombarding neighbors who picked it up unwittingly — through their phones, fences, fax machines, even toilets. "It's awful, it's unbelievable, at night it's unbearable," Silver Lake resident Tanya Busko told the Los Angeles Times in 1989. "You can walk in my yard when it rains and hear the 'rap, rap' music on the chain-link fence. ... In the bathroom, you can hear it coming through the toilet plumbing." The station spent a small fortune buying interference filters, alleviating the problem for most folks who complained. But for everybody else who hated hip-hop? Well, they were out of luck. By the time President Reagan left office, Los Angeles was inextricably linked to hardcore hip-hop, which largely sucked the life out of good-time East Coast party rap in favor of something that felt more immediate, more real and more dangerous. To many kids, it sounded like the future, but it also struck fear in the hearts of middle-class citizens across the country and became increasingly linked to real-life violence. [KDAY 1580 helped gangsta rap get its foothold. The wildly innovative station took the pulse of urban L.A. and helped usher in such trailblazers as Ice-T, N.W.A and Above the Law. Without KDAY, West Coast rap almost certainly wouldn't have exploded as it did — after all, nobody else was giving it airplay. "KDAY was the one station that you could make a record, walk through the door, hand it to them, and they'd put it on the air," recalls Ice-T. "Right then!" Born in 1956, the station's moniker likely derived from its strictly daytime broadcast license. In its early days, it featured Top 40 music and well-known jocks such as Art Laboe and Alan Freed. But its signal shot straight into South L.A., and before long its focus was on mainstream fare from black artists, including Marvin Gaye and Ray Charles. (It also featured comedians Jack Burns and his partner, George Carlin.) By the early 1970s, it was broadcasting around the clock, and the legendary Wolfman Jack was on its airwaves. KDAY jock Steve Woods played exclusively rap, that was never the case. R&B was in the mix until the end. In fact, at one point, program director J.J. Johnson decided to scrub hip-hop from the playlist. "I initially thought it was a flash in the pan, like a lot of guys my age," says Johnson, who is now 61 and does freelance audio production. Ratings suffered, and Johnson lifted the ban for Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's 1982 hit "The Message." Rap only became dominant on KDAY after the 1983 arrival of Greg Mack, who grew up in the segregated small town of Van Alstyne, Texas — raising cows, pigs and horses. He'd been hired away from a Houston station by KDAY's then-program director Jack Patterson. It was clear to Mack that management was looking to shake things up. "My first week there," he remembers, "we were like, 'We need to figure this out, because we're getting our butts kicked.'" Mack's mother lived in South Central L.A., and he and his young family joined her there, where they were treated to the sound of gunshots and "ghetto bird" police helicopters flying overhead at night. "Because my wife at the time was Hispanic, we always got pulled over," recalls Mack, who is black. "They always thought I was up to no good, that I was riding around with a girl of a different race like I was a pimp." But the neighborhood helped him take the pulse of the streets, which meant hip-hop. Despite the fact that the genre had little institutional support here from labels, record shops or distributors, Mack got to work integrating the sound at the station. Rap back then was driven by DJs and often had an electro flavor. Mack was particularly impressed by a turntable group called Uncle Jamm's Army, which performed before thousands at the Sports Arena. He enlisted his own version of the Army for the station, including future N.W.A members DJ Yella and Dr. Dre from a group called World Class Wreckin' Cru. "He was always a very respectful kid, real nice, real shy," Mack remembers of Dre, who crafted mixes for Mack's daily show in the garage of his groupmate Alonzo Williams. Dre's style was unique. Rather than simply spinning records, he'd splice different elements of songs together with a four-track mixer. "You might be a whole other artist," Mack recounts. "People would say, 'Oh, he's not a real DJ.' I'd be like, 'I don't care what you call it, shit sounds good!" Dre and Yella were gone within a year, when N.W.A got serious. So Mack built up a new crew of young "Mixmasters." They weren't on-air disc jockeys; instead, they spun records on location that were broadcast live through a special phone line. But they brought KDAY hip-hop credibility by incorporating the hottest songs. The group's spiritual leader, Tony G, grew up outside New York City, and friends and family would send him new work from artists like Public Enemy, T La Rock and Eric B & Rakim — stuff practically nobody else in L.A. had. They posted up at the toughest high schools and gangland roller-skate hot spots. As Mixmaster Hen-Gee would later describe the locations to writer Brian Coleman: "They were the killing fields." [ "There was always someone getting shot or stabbed," Tony G adds. "The teachers were scared, the security were scared a sawed-off shotgun inside the walls of his speakers. Tough-talking rappers, meanwhile, were so desperate to get their music onto the air that they offered cocaine, heroin and handfuls of \$100 bills, Mack says. Tony G tells the story of a prominent local DJ who produced for Ice-T. When KDAY refused to go inside and shoot up Mack, but Tony G intercepted him and talked him down. Mack is now 53 and living in suburban Fresno. Though he still has a Sunday night show on a Lancaster/Palmdale station, he primarily makes his living as a radio consultant. He wears thin-framed glasses and has something of a nerdy, details-focused demeanor. Still, he's in good shape, and his reputation as a ladies' man is believable. (He's about to be divorced for the third time.) Back in the day, he flirted on-air with Janet Jackson; after meeting her when she came to Houston on a promotional tour, he'd call her up and they'd visit amusement parks together. He's been a solid ambassador for the KDAY 1580 legacy. Though stations WBLS and WQHT in New York, San Francisco stalwart KMEL and Power all played critical roles in building rap's ubiquity, KDAY's story (and Mack's own) has become a critical part of the Business of Hip-Hop. "The men and women who brought hip-hop to American radio ...," Charnas writes, listing Mack first among them, "basically ended the cultural segregation that had reigned in American radio since its inception in the early 20th century." Hip-hop, in other words, has become everyone's pop music. On a recent midsummer day, Mack gives a tour of Mid-City rink World on Wheels, which has barely changed since a line stretched out the door for LL Cool J's KDAY-hosted show in the mid-1980s. The walls remain lined with soda and candy. About all that's missing is the 1580 KDAY sign, more than 10 feet long and lit up with lights, which sat just off the skating floor. (Unfortunately, Mack's told, the rink's new owners tossed it from storage only recently.) "Jheri curl was popular, and it got so hot in here that by the end of the night the floors would be wet," Mack recalls, surveying a handful of kids rolling around the oval-shaped hardwood beneath disco balls. In the '80s, the spot was a favored location for the KDAY Mixmasters — as well as the Rollin 60s Crips. Its Compton counterpart Skateland, meanwhile, was the terrain of the Compton Bloods. Though Mack denies accepting payola, he'd keep artists off his airwaves unless they'd play promotional shows for the station, and thus landed talent like Run-DMC and Brooklyn rapper Big Daddy Kane. Mixmaster DJ M.Walk remembers the latter by from the Rollin 60s jumped concert at the downtown Latin club Casa Camino Real in the latter part of the times Tony G definitely had to pull out something." Gang violence plagued L.A., and concerts like the one in 1986 at Long Beach Arena linked the strife to hip-hop. Headliners Run-DMC never took the stage because a fight broke out; Crips and Bloods began weaponizing broken chair legs and yanking off young girls' necklaces. Security was overwhelmed, and dozens were injured. "Some critics, like Parents Music Resource Center crusader Tipper Gore," People magazine noted, "believe there is a subliminal message in rap music — that 'it's OK to beat people up.'" After years of tension, however, the murders of Tupac and his Brooklyn rival Notorious B.I.G. finally led to a ramping-down of rhetoric. The murder rate in Los Angeles began to fall, from an average of more than 1,000 per year in the early '90s to fewer than 300 in 2011. "Things have changed a lot," Ice-T says. "That edge that was on L.A., it's pretty much gone. Yeah, you can still get shot in L.A., but back then, the wrong color got you shot where you stood. It was much worse." KDAY didn't survive to see it. The station ceded its signal in 1991 to a business-oriented talk format. It's not that the ratings were terrible; many blame the fact that AM had gone out of vogue for music. [But nostalgia for the station remained, and in the mid-aughts an FM outfit operating at 93.5 FM took on the KDAY name. Then, in 2009, it committed fully to a classic-rap format. Delighted listeners saw it as the second coming, their glory years come back to life. Many of the station's former DJs, however, think it's an abomination. At 6:30 a.m. on a recent Friday, David "Tattoo" Gonzalez broadcasts from KDAY's Mid-City studios, its walls covered with black banners promoting the station's "Back in the Day Hits." He's drinking coffee and talking trash. For a time KDAY hadn't been using jocks, but the 32-year-old former Power 106 personality began the morning-show gig in January. Gonzalez, who has charm to spare, a gut and perpetual stubble, speaks with an almost sing-song cadence, peppered with frequent use of "man" and "bro." His inflections reflect his upbringing as a native Spanish speaker; raised bilingual in East L.A. by Mexican parents, he sometimes does on-air interviews in Spanish. He sounds like that funny kid at the back of class who's always talking himself into (and out of) trouble. That he's had a few chaotic years hasn't slowed his roll. "I'm a real-ass person, bro," he says, speaking of his personal bankruptcy filing and his conviction for disturbing the peace after a heated fight with his wife, both in 2010. "When white people argue in their crib, it's all good. When Mexicans argue, it's disturbing the fucking peace." The original KDAY succeeded on AM not just because of its tunes but because of its ragtag DJ lineup, many of whom were akin to character actors. Beloved jock Russ Parr — whose current morning show is widely syndicated around the country (but not on the current KDAY) — did impressions of Magic Johnson and performed songs like "Roaches," a parody of Timex Social Club's 1986 hit "Rumors." Station newscaster Lee Marshall, meanwhile, virulently castigated gang members in a deep, commanding delivery. Turns out he was a 40-year-old white guy. Gonzalez grew up on KDAY AM 1580 himself. Arrested numerous times and jailed at 19 after shooting at (and missing) his biological father — whom he says abandoned him for a long stretch — he possesses the chutzpah of a natural-born morning-show host, or maybe a Jackass actor. Once, on air, he was shot in the testicles with a Taser, and he drew tabloid notice last year for a weird fetish video in which he was whipped by Nadya Suleman, aka Octomom. She'd donned a black corset; he'd impersonated a baby and wore a diaper. They made it to spoof an offer she received to appear in a porno, he explains. But the tattoo across his forehead truly seals his gonzo credentials. Removing his Raiders cap, he displays it, sprawled in oddly formal cursive: "I Slept With Shaq." He got the ink during a contest for Lakers NBA Finals tickets in 2001, a challenge presented by Power morning-show DJ Big Boy. Gonzalez showed the handiwork to Shaq — who was impressed — and Big Boy soon gave him a job at the station. Gonzalez worked at Power for the better part of a decade, before being booted for "a sticky situation" he won't discuss. (Power representatives also declined comment.) But he's clearly revitalized, and this morning, as Debbie Deb's 1986 electro hit "Look Out Weekend" plays on air, he takes some swipes at Power, the hip-hop juggernaut that followed in the original KDAY's wake and now dominates L.A. radio by playing the newest rap and R&B hits. "We'd all pretended we liked [Power's music]. But everyone there would get out of work, into their cars, and put on KDAY." goes by CeCe. This morning she's in flip-flops, working the curling iron while she prepares an on-air news bit about a woman who's been stalking Usher. Like Gonzalez, she shares a background with her listeners, whom the station estimates at about 60 percent Latino. Born in Compton and raised in South L.A., she grew up on gangsta rap, just like groundbreaking KDAY Mixmaster Julio G and tons of other Los Angeles-area Latinos. "This is our format," Gonzalez says, "our era, our time." It was program director Adrian Scott who lobbied for the hip-hop oldies format. In the late aughts the station struggled, playing contemporary R&B and rap, and featuring syndicated hosts like Steve Harvey. Scott saw a better way. "I always used to say, 'Whatever happened to that music when I was growing up, where did it go?'" he says. Stations like Power and KIIS specialized in current hits but neglected folks in their late 20s and early 30s who had grown out of that music, Scott says — the very people who came of age when Los Angeles hip-hop took over. [ "A lot of the artists are from here, so their fan base is from here," he says, adding: "I knew we had a lot of equity in the call letters, so I thought, 'Why don't we just call it KDAY?' " Management was on board, and after some tinkering, they've honed a winning formula. The vast majority of KDAY's programming is hip-hop that isn't currently on the charts, although occasionally it plays some R&B and new music. It's one of only a small handful of stations in the country doing this; none of the others have KDAY's visibility. The trick is making old songs sound fresh, says general manager Zeke Chaidez. Other than the morning show, they don't put much emphasis on the jocks. "The star is the music, not the personalities," he says. As the sole station belonging to Panama City, Fla.-based parent company Magic Broadcasting, KDAY faces competition in L.A. mostly from broadcasters owned by conglomerates with greater resources and advertising muscle. Old-school R&B outlet KHHT is the property of Clear Channel, while retro-rock station KCBS belongs to another behemoth, CBS Radio. Power, which in the most recent ratings was No. 1 overall in the 18-to-34 demographic with a 7.4 share, is owned by Emmis Communications — also the parent company of New York rap juggernaut WQHT. That KDAY can hold its own speaks to the appeal of its product. In an era when a sheet of songs that works in Boise is assumed to work just as well in Birmingham, it makes sense that an organically evolved format — with a focus on its local roots — would succeed. In some ways, the new KDAY is a trendsetter on par with the original. It also does its best to capitalize on the fondness Angelenos maintain for its AM predecessor. "We started this hip-hop thing," Gonzalez said on the air recently. Some of the station's promotional ads reference "the Legendary KDAY." This appropriation has not sat well with many members of the old guard, who resent not being invited to the party. After KDAY re-emerged in 2004, it enlisted former Mixmaster Julio G but not Greg Mack, who proceeded to counter with his own "Real KDAY Show" on Power. Mack says now that he's not really on board with the new format. "Power is the closest thing to what KDAY would have sounded like today." After all, while he played music bubbling up from the streets, the new outfit's songs have already been embraced by two generations. Some of the former Mixmasters are bitter as well. "I'm still an active DJ, and I'm better now than I was then," DJ M.Walk says. "To see the new station capitalize on all the stuff that we did ... there's no recognition. I look at it like the Lakers folding, then somebody buys the team and brings it back, but they won't let James Worthy and Magic Johnson have any part of it. It's a hurtful process." "They ruined our legacy, ruined what everybody thought we were," Tony G says. "We sounded nothing like this." He claims that the songs KDAY currently plays aren't chosen by knowledgeable people — they're culled from "selectors" and "Google playlists." Adrian Scott counters that he in fact spends the bulk of his days handpicking exactly which tracks his DJs will play. Many stations feature only 100 different songs per week; Scott says he has 500 in rotation. Though you'll rarely get through a couple hours without hearing some Kurupt or Nate Dogg — and Scott's bread-and-butter are albums like Snoop's Doggystyle and Bone Thugs-N-Harmony's E. 1999 Eternal — KDAY jocks play songs from as recently as five years ago, so long as they have the breezy aesthetic and wistful sentimentality that listeners crave. Cash Money-era Lil Wayne is cool, but new Weezy is not. At the end of the day, there is no playbook, because there's little precedent. "It's hard to make old meatloaf good," Scott says. "I'm breaking the rules of programming in a sense. We're flying by the seat of our pants." Back at the morning show, Gonzalez and Valencia praise the old KDAY talent. "They paved the path for me and Tatt to be on here," Valencia says. "But we also grew up to this music. This is our culture, too. I lived in Compton, Watts, Lynwood. I was bumping this music at barbecues." "We pay respect to those DJs, but it's like, what kind of respect do you want? Do you want us to literally surrender our jobs?" Gonzalez adds. [ "People are listening for the music, not for the old talent," says general manager Chaidez. When Elvis Presley was performing on The Ed Sullivan Show, it surely never occurred to the teenagers tuning in that someday they'd be old — and that they'd still be listening to Elvis. Today, it's downright funny to think that his songs once were edgy, his gyrations controversial. But future generations likely will see N.W.A in the same way. What once seemed violent and scary will have become fun and breezy. The music will be stripped of its raw fury, serving instead as something of an audio time machine, taking us back to the days before mortgages and retirement plans. The original KDAY spoke to the wild ones shopping at swap meets, slanging in the streets and driving around past curfew in their parents' cars. When gangsta rap eventually got to the wealthier white kids, they felt no less exhilaration. But the current KDAY no longer represents hip-hop youth culture; most of those kids today are probably Power fans. What will be the new KDAY's legacy? Most likely that of a successful experiment, which birthed an idea whose time had arrived. "I think we're the mother ship for more of these [classic-rap stations] to come," Adrian Scott predicts. "Once they see the level of success we've seen here, more stations will pop up." That sounds like an understatement. In fact, it seems certain that within a decade or so we'll have rap oldies stations from coast to coast, undoubtedly run by Clear Channel, or its equivalent. And, yes, one day, they'll probably be playing "Fuck tha Police" at our old folks home. It sounds depressing, but maybe it's not. It beats Neil Diamond. And even if we're wearing hearing aids and Depends, damn if the music won't still be gangsta.

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