

ACE Weekly

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LEXINGTON'S FREE NEWSPAPER



WELLS LEXINGTON

**MORE TOWER, MORE POWER:
CAN YOU HEAR US NOW?**

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	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
2 AM to 6 AM	HAV	DAVID	MIKE	RYAN	RYAN	blue Sounds of The Night SCOTT WARD	WHITNEY PURPLE & STEVE BUTLER
6 AM to 8 AM	AV	CHRISTIE	AV	COLTAS	MARLA BILLINGS	JOE MCDONALD	Christian Rock TONYA ROBERTSON & AMY TROENDLY
8 AM to 11 AM	AV	AV	SCOTT FERGU	AV	BRIAN SOSBY	DONNA THORNDALE	TIM MOOSEY
11 AM to 2 PM	SCOTT	THE PRECIOUS METAL	DAWN	ZALE	KAREN GATZ	The Blue Yodel Cafe	STOP THE ROCK 60 S The Rock
2 PM to 5 PM	AV	AV	SHAWN MCCARNEY	RACHEL PERETZ	PAM FOLEY THE METAL MATRIARCH	HARRY	60 S Jazz PLUMMER
5 PM to 8 PM	TOM FLANIGAN	LARRY SHELDON	LISA	WYN	JACK	blues LESLIE	STEVE

REFLECTIONS ON WRFL's 7900 WATTS REBIRTH

by Mick Jeffries

June 17, 2010 was a very special day for WRFL-FM, the University of Kentucky's volunteer-operated "alternative" radio station. It is, in total fact, the most important day since the day the station went on the air.

That's because — after ten years of paperwork, construction, fundraising, and certifications — the station's signal was boosted from 250 watts to 7900 watts. With the full support of the FCC.

AND THAT RIOT OF SOUNDS TRAVELING AT 88.1 MEGAHERTZ WILL MATTER TO SOME OF THOSE WHO HEAR IT.

I learned of it Thursday morning at 5:30am, after reading an email from WRFL's unflappable Faculty Advisor, John Clark:

Hi, RFLiens. Shortly after midnight, at 12:10:58, to be precise, with little fanfare, but lots of love, [Program Director] Matt Gibson and I applied our digits to the proper places on the transmitter touchscreen. Then we stood back in silence and awe and watched the digital readout climb. Without even beginning to name names, many thanks to everyone who had anything to do with this awesome event, all the way back to 1996, when we first started working on it.

After that, I got to spend my show as the first "waking day" deejay to share this news with listeners. What a joy. Pondering it myself, I've been overcome repeatedly with joyful little tears.

Maybe I'm just glad we're both still alive, WRFL & I.

And while I **did** help start the station, I **didn't** expect it to be the beacon that it is in my life, decades after those outlandish college times — and years after leaving to "get on with my life."

Nor did I expect for Life to bring me back to Lexington, or for a young friend named Ross Compton — who knew I'd been involved in "the early days" of the station — to arrange a shift for me, should I want one. It hadn't occurred to me, but I was flattered. At the time, my life seemed in terrible flux, and the idea of *playing a little music on the radio* seemed like a welcome diversion from the daily challenge of living alone with my struggling teenage daughter.

Flash forward eight years and here I am: *Thursdays, 6 - 9 am*

My daughter got her shit together, and so did I. Sometimes, I've flogged myself, thinking I must be a loser because I still do a radio show at a station I helped start in the late 80s. Ironically, it could be that being on the radio is the only thing that hasn't changed for me. Even my show — a genial "morning zoo" thing called *Trivial Thursdays* — I jokingly call "the show I *never* would have allowed *anybody* to do" when I was WRFL's 2nd Program Director.

More than just error-prone volunteers playing music nobody's ever heard of, WRFL really is a **beacon**. Over and over, I've seen it speak to people *who need it* for one reason or another. Within those graffiti- and sticker-laden walls, some of those people have become my dear friends, and *some of those people were not even born* in 1986-7, when a handful of bright misfits (who were very similar to some of my young friends today) were trying to figure out *how you start a radio station*.

And that must be where the emotion comes from for me.

Because how could I feel anything but profound gratitude for this station — and

my good fortune to be so involved in its existence — when it's still nurturing me 25 years later?

Last week's power upgrade will deliver the sounds of 60+ volunteer deejays to *far more ears*. Previously limited to Lexington, we'll now reach west beyond Frankfort.

South past Nicholasville. And north towards Cincinnati. And into the country — to places with names like Stamping Ground and Waddy. *And Peytona, of course.*

And that riot of sounds traveling at 88.1 megahertz will **matter** to some of those who hear it. Those sounds will matter in a way

that says something like: "Maybe it's okay to be weird or a little different. Listen to that radio station do **those people** sound normal?"

And in some strange way, this notion will give some souls the permission they need to do the **wonderful things** that they are meant to do.

How could I ask to be involved in anything better than that?

This reflection is entirely dedicated to my friend and regular inspiration, the inestimable Kakkie Urch, a force of nature without whom so many of us wouldn't be talking or even know each other to say nothing of listening to this beloved radio station. ■

Trivial Thursdays was voted Best Local Radio Show by Ace Readers in the 2009 Best of Lex Readers Poll. It airs 7 am to 9 am every Thursday on 88.1 WRFL. July 1 the guest will be Steve Daniels, LA screenwriter and WRFL original, and July 29 will be Wyn Morris of the Morris book shop and WRFL's 2nd Music Director.



Acting as the station's 2nd Program Director in 1990. photo

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photos by Brian Connors-Manke