

Campus Radio: CJSR head Kane

by Cam McCulloch

Recently, the Gateway's Cam McCulloch spoke with Brent Kane. Kane's tale is a fascinating one of power struggles, programming content, and budget cutbacks. The interview follows:

Right off the bat, what's wrong with commercial radio?

A song's position on the charts can almost always be directly attributed to the amount of money pumped into its promotion. No matter how mediocre a band is, enough self-promotion will sell records and that translates into radio play. Radio has gone totally downhill. It's antiseptic.

In the early '70's, FM meant DJ's played what they liked; Program Directors took chances. Now it's strictly a big business. If you make a mistake by overplaying a certain artist and ratings dip, you're fired. The big misconception is that radio is glamorous. It's not. Radio is sleazy and devoid of feeling.

What separates CJSR from commercial radio stations like K-97 and CHED?

We're content conscious. That is, we play what the audience wants to hear. For instance, song length is irrelevant at CJSR. In commercial radio, advertisers often dictate what songs get played. So what you end up with is three minutes of homogenized crap.

Where does CJSR get its revenue?

We are a limited commercial radio station, which means our revenue is a combination of on-air advertising, AIRtight (CJSR program guide) advertising, our own fundraising, and the Student Union subsidy.

What is the SU contribution?

This year we received a \$30,000 subsidy, which is down from \$50,000 last year.

Is \$30,000 enough money to run the station?

The end of the fiscal year is March

Could CJSR do with even less paid staff?

Theoretically yes; but realistically no, not without severely damaging the quality of the station.

Is there any possibility, then, of expanding from 44 watts?

Well, more power means more audience means more advertising revenue.

But a bigger transmitter, and we're talking about a minimum cost of \$20,000, would have to be located off-campus, at enormous cost for tower rental fee.

Anyway, because we're on a logarithm, 44 watts equals 100 watts or even 250 watts for that matter.

And our location right across the river from downtown, where there

"I decided I wanted to be a populist, not a dictator."

is a huge audience potential, gives us an edge over the commercial station whose transmitters are mostly on the South Side.

Ultimately, because of the tenuous budget situation it's difficult to make long-range commitments like a bigger transmitter. We have to replace some old equipment before we can think about a better signal, an improved format, what have you.

Is there any danger of further cuts to the budget?

I don't think so. What the SU wanted from CJSR was a show of fiscal responsibility. And I think we've accomplished that. I mean \$30,000 gets us by but not ahead. Our on-air board is 25 years old. Other equipment has to be replaced. The station is being run on paper clips, rubber bands, and chewing gum. I don't think a budget increase would be out of line considering what a drop in the bucket \$30,000 is to the total SU budget.

There's more involved than dollars and cents though. It's very prestigious for a University to have its own FM station. We carry the U of A name throughout the Edmonton community and outlying areas. And no campus radio station will be licensed for FM if it doesn't have the support of the Student Union. Luckily, the combination of a new SU executive and a new station

executive has resulted in a new era of cooperation. The current VF Finance, Tim Boston, has done an excellent job. As the chairperson of FACRA, he not only has the power but the political will and the brains to make it work.

How profitable are the stations own fundraising efforts?

Since we have zero money for promotion, and this includes being shut out of the BBM survey which is a tremendous cost, all our advertising has to be solicited. We have no walk-in advertising in other words. But we work hard at generating our own revenue. Our major fundraising drive last spring was successful but I'd like to expand it even further. We also have our monthly bingos to help us along.

How does a high profile area like

Sports help?

To be honest, the ad revenue generated from our sports programming has been less than anticipated. Last weekend's hockey broadcast from Vancouver was cancelled for economic and competitive reasons. That is, the UBC T-Birds are both

ing playoffs. After that, we hope some of the advertising on sports spills over to our regular programming.

What's your philosophy regarding other areas of programming?

On air we like our DJ's to talk to people, not at them. To us, the audience is personal, not just a number. And this is what separates us from commercial radio. Our specialty programming attracts a certain audience. It sometimes takes a while for new listeners to understand our station but with a little effort, most people can find something they like at 88.5 FM.

What about the people that make CJSR work?

There are over 100 volunteers at the station. About 80 per cent are students, which is more than most

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lousy and too far away. But we're hoping for big things from the game with NAIT. Not only in terms of ads but the exposure we'll get as well. Hopefully, listeners will carry over to our regular Golden Bear broadcasts. We'll be carrying every hockey game from now on, includ-

How Canadian university radio stations stack up

A common goal of nearly all campus radio stations across Canada is to provide quality alternative programming to regular commercial radio fare. What isn't so common is the varying degrees of financial support that each campus radio station received.

Some, like Carleton's CKCU, in Ottawa, utilize a large budget to capture an audience that rivals many commercial stations in the area. Others, like the University of Saskatchewan's CHSK, get shut down because of lack of financial support.

The University of Alberta's CJSR, at 44 watts and struggling to stay on a tight budget, would be somewhere between the two extremes.

At Carleton, an annual operating budget of \$225,000 has helped CKCU to build a weekly audience of 100,000 and a heady 350,000 listeners. Considered the flagship campus radio station in Canada, CKCU is the leader in its field.

Left out in the field, on the other hand, was CHSK in Saskatchewan, which marked the first anniversary of its demise on September 30th of this year. According to its station manager, CHSK suffered from underfunding since 1977, leaving it unable to buy records for four years.

University	Students	Radio Station	Paid Staff	SU Subsidy
Carleton	16,734	CKCU-FM (12,000W)	6	\$75,000
Ryerson	18,764	CKLN-FM (250W)	3	\$75,000
UBC	28,059	CITR-FM (49W)	N/A	\$65,000
U of C	20,272	CJSW-FM (1900W)	3	\$60,000
U of A	28,575	CJSR-FM (44W)	6	\$30,000

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31 and it will be down to the wire budget-wise. The worst case scenario is that we might be three per cent over budget — maybe. January is looking good ad-wise.

How does the smaller budget affect personnel?

The news director position was unoccupied for a time but we now have someone on a government grant until the end of April anyway. But the teletype machine, which is our major news source, has to go because it costs \$700 per month.

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