

## Morning DJs have best, worst spot for radio show

By Cray Pixley  
ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

It is a familiar morning ritual. The sound of the music on the clock radio jars you awake, and the chirpy voice of the morning disc jockey prods you out of the confines of a warm bed.

For some people, only the morning radio show can get them off to work or class. Without the humor, music, news and chatter of the morning DJs, they would drift back into the dream world of sleep.

No matter how early you crawl out of bed, those cheerful DJs seem to be already fully awake and eager to prepare their listeners for the day ahead.

Who are these people who are working before the rooster crows, and with such energy?

Early morning shows usually begin at 6 a.m. and finish by 10 a.m. Most DJs who work the morning shows roll out of bed by 4 a.m. to get to work.

While this occupation may not sound like a career that comes with a schedule to be envied, the early morning shift is the most sought-after by disc jockeys. Regardless of the early hours and lack of opportunity to sleep in late, the early morning show is the choice spot in radio broadcasting.

Why? "The 6-10 a.m. slot is the most listened to time slot in radio," Roger W.W. Garrett, KTAM-KORA morning disc jockey says.

"It is the one time of day that there are more people listening to the radio than watching television. It is prime time."

"It is the shift to have on any radio station."

Most disc jockeys begin their career by working the late night time slots before graduating to day slots and then to afternoon drive time during rush hour. The morning slot is the ultimate goal for up-and-coming DJs.

Randy Davis, disc jockey for KTSR-FM, jokingly says money is the reason the early morning show is attractive, but agrees the 6-10 a.m. slot is the job to have.

"Everybody in radio aspires to this position," Davis says. "This is where the listeners, the money and everything is at. The morning show makes or breaks a radio station."

"If you can keep the listeners in the morning, you can keep them all day long."

Although the morning show is the pinnacle of radio programs, DJs say they enjoy their work because of the freedom the morning slot brings to their job.

"Usually the morning DJs are more free to use humor and to be zany," Davis says.

"I have the opportunity to be free from some of the formats that other time slots must work within."

Whereas most disc jockeys in other time slots report the news and play the music with minimal freedom for chatting or comedic performance, early morning DJs use comedy and conversation to draw the listeners into an intimate forum.

Morning disc jockeys are often referred to as personalities and the la-

bel fits. Each DJ has a niche and persona known by listeners.

Laughter, commotion and comedy are used often by morning radio personalities in their never-ending quests to wake people up.

Humor is the byword for morning shows.

Each disc jockey has his or her own format, whether it be a serious or crazy show, but most use humor in some form. Humor is the key to waking people up.

On KKYS, "The Chuck Redden Show" features various fictional personalities like Gym Shorts, who announces sports; Willie B. Clear, who announces the weather; and I.B. High, who gives the helicopter traffic report.

Redden, who does all the character voices, says humor is what people need to wake up in the morning.

"I think people want to laugh in the morning," Redden says. "I want to make people smile. I do the characters and announce birthdays."

Davis says he tries to make people think as well as laugh.

"I try to be funny and keep everything upbeat," he says. "I try to invoke people to call the station by stirring up controversy. This usually gets people revved up in the morning."

Davis says he avoids trying to use the "smoke and mirrors" tactics of making people think there is a zoo of people with him in the studio.

"Some of the radio stations in the bigger markets like Houston or Dallas can get away with it, but it's just me and the listeners," he says.

"It is too hard to fool people. There is no reason to have people laughing and clapping in the background like there are 500 people with me."

"People are going to laugh or they are not going to laugh."

Garrett, who will not divulge what

interesting job."

Garrett says he doesn't feel confused by his switches from station to station because each show has a definite personality.

"It's a high-pressure situation but I don't feel like I'm developing a split personality," he says jokingly.

It would be natural to assume that after closing out their morning programs at 10 a.m., the disc jockeys would make a beeline for a nap, but the work day is not over for these three DJs. They have much more work to do during the day.

Redden is not only a DJ, but also the program director and station manager for KKYS. His work day begins at 5 a.m. with an oldies show and often lasts until six in the evening.

"I'm definitely a morning person, because I have the most energy then," Redden says.

"I can get by on about six hours of sleep and rarely get tired during my show, he says. "I've been doing morning radio for 10 years, and I really enjoy it."

"Some days, I will be at work for 13 hours. After work, my wife and I go for a walk."

When Garrett is not spinning the discs during "The Big Morning Show," he spends his time as the program director for KTAM and KORA.

"My job is everything you hear on the radio," Garrett says. "I work closely with the other DJs and prepare the music and news with the help of the music director and news director."

Garrett also does work for KTAM-KORA outside the station.

"I DJ the Rock 'n' Roll Oldies Show at the Sundance club on Saturdays and a happy hour on Wednesday afternoons for KTAM at the

**"E**verybody in radio aspires to (the morning show). This is where the listeners, the money and everything is at. The morning show makes or breaks a radio station. If you can keep the listeners in the morning, you can keep them all day long."

— Randy Davis, KTSR-FM disc jockey

the triple W's in his name mean, approaches his show with a less humorous perspective.

"My goal is to entertain and inform, Garrett says. "People like to start a day with a positive attitude. We give them the news, weather and play their favorite songs."

Garrett works the morning show simultaneously for KTAM, an oldies program, and KORA, a contemporary country music station.

"I'm back and forth between the stations, and it is a very action-packed job," he says.

"It's often borderline chaos. I can't really relax because it is like broadcasting eight hours in a four-hour shift."

The twin jobs allow Garrett to use a different on-air persona to fit each radio show.

"On KORA, I play the straight man but on KTAM, people call in more often, and I can be more of a jester," he says. "It makes for an in-

same club.

"Sometimes I DJ at other promotional events for KORA such as chili cook-offs or beach contests."

Garrett says he doesn't feel the need to take a nap in between his morning show and his other duties.

"When I first started the morning show, I thought I would schedule my day so that I could take an afternoon nap," he says. "But a nap gives me a headache so I don't even mess with it."

Davis does admit that he doesn't bound out of bed as easily as he would like to and succumbs to an occasional nap after work.

"Getting up at 4 a.m. is not my favorite thing and it can throw off my schedule," he says.

"Usually morning personalities do a lot of outside work that can take a toll on their health."

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# ON THE AIR

*Student enjoys DJing, making people want to get up and dance*

By Chuck Lovejoy

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

The dance floor is dead. Darren Meeks places a translucent, amber-colored record on the turntable, and lowering the tonearm, spins it around and around with his fingers.

"Watch this," he nearly screams at me as the song, already booming out of the club's speakers, begins to wind down into repetitive passages that are perfect for the transition into the new song.

He places his hand on a slide lever located on the DJ booth's mixing board and slowly moves it to the right. CCCP's "American-Soviets" slowly awakens beneath the first song and when the lever is firmly pushed all the way to the right, blasts its way into the air out of the club's speakers.

With a flick of a switch, I bathe the dance floor with red and white pulses of light just in time to see a mass of individuals dressed mostly in black swarm from the shadows into the smoky air under the lights.

"They really love this song," Meeks says, again shouting.

He is right. Where before there was a sparsely populated dance floor there is now an area filled with a writhing mob.

A certain satisfaction seems to come over both of us as the people dance wildly, obviously having a good time.

"It gives me a good feeling to see people having fun because they like what I play," Meeks says as he takes the now-sleeping first record off the other turntable and reaches for another to succeed "American-Soviets."

This non-stop procession of songs goes on for three more hours until the last song echoes in the air and the house lights come on, signaling the end of the evening.

What seemed to me a frantic five and one-half hours was only relaxed work for Meeks, a weekend DJ at Parthenon who allowed



Photo by Fredrick D. Joe

DJ Darren Meeks pauses during a busy night of playing hot dance tunes and running the lights in the Parthenon dance club.

me to help him in the booth one Friday night.

It's no wonder the job is easy for the Texas A&M senior and BANA major — he has been a club DJ around the College Station area for the last two years, working at Parthenon as well as at the now-defunct clubs Rocco's and Geo-Matrix.

He got his start in clubs almost by accident one night at Rocco's when he played music in between the sets of a live band called the Rain. The manager of the club liked what Meeks played and asked him to begin working at the club by playing music four nights

the next week.

"I don't know what he saw in me," Meeks said. "I didn't know what I was doing."

But the skill came gradually, as he practiced at home and got tips from other DJs by asking questions and simply watching them work.

Meeks was no stranger to the DJ life, however. For the two semesters preceding his start at Rocco's, he had been the host of a progressive music show called "The Dance Society" on A&M's student radio station, KANM.

Controlling the music at a club

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## Late night spots let DJs prove themselves

By Keith Spera

REVIEWER

It's 3 a.m. on a recent Friday night. Most of College Station has bedded down for the evening. The bars are closed, the club DJs have packed up their equipment, and the dorms, usually full of music, are quiet.

Some people, however, are still wide awake and are still playing music. They will continue to spin records until 6 a.m. Besides enjoying themselves, these people consider their late-night activities a valuable part of their education.

These nightbirds are the people who work one of the toughest shifts in a radio station's around-the-clock broadcast cycle — the midnight to six a.m. weekend shift.

Those who work this grueling shift usually are not full-time employees of the station, and they haven't had much on-air experience. Generally, (and especially in College Station), they are students who want to pursue a career in radio or some other area of broadcasting, and are getting some hands-on experience while they are still in school.

Sandy Nite, who works late-night weekend shifts at KKYS-FM, said she enjoys her current job, even though it's not the most prestigious shift, and considers it to be a good

start to a radio career.

"In radio, you move up if you prove yourself, and spend time working at it," she said.

Kim Dillon, a 20-year-old Texas A&M sophomore agricultural journalism major, is on the air at KORA-FM during the midnight-to-six weekend shift, and she calls her job "a total blast." She added, "It's definitely an important supplement to my education."

Chris Hall, 19, a part-time employee of KTSR-FM, considers her late-night weekend shifts "a good start, which will help me get my bearings." She eventually wants to go into TV broadcasting.

The midnight to 6 a.m. weekend slot is used by station managers to give new, inexperienced, and up-and-coming DJs some practice on the air when not too many people are listening.

"I'd never had radio experience," Dillon said. "My boss put me on this shift so he could give me experience, and everyone wouldn't hear when I screwed up."

Not surprisingly, DJs who broadcast in the wee hours of the morning sometimes get the feeling no one at all is listening to them.

Dillon said she definitely gets that feeling.

"It'll be strange," she said. "I'll think no one is out there, and I'll announce some off-the-wall PSA (pub-

lic service announcement), and someone will call and want to hear more about it. That restores my faith."

The people who listen at these late hours are a varied bunch. Late-night DJs often acquire dedicated, regular listeners.

Byron Nelson, 31, a KTAM-AM late-night weekend and A&M junior history major, said he has a faithful audience among convenience store employees who work the same late hours as he does.

The requests phoned into radio stations late at night can be unusual.

"I got a call from a lady who sounded well at first," Dillon said, "but then she asked if I had ever seen or talked to Jesus. Apparently she wanted to meet him."

Did she make a request?

"Yeah, she wanted me to dedicate Randy Travis's 'Deeper Than the Holler' to Jesus," said Dillon. "I played it."

Hall also has had her share of unusual callers.

"There was one lady who would call up drunk and want to hear Berlin's 'Take My Breath Away,'" she said.

"She'd call up a couple of minutes after the song was over to tell me that she was almost asleep, and to thank me for playing it," she said.

The DJs who work late at night, when there are fewer listeners and

## KANM's music format lets DJs expose listeners to more than latest hits

By Stacey Babin

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

KANM-FM, Texas A&M's student-operated radio station, is not like most radio stations. It does not have a strict format for music programs, and all disc jockeys are volunteers who make up their own radio shows.

In a small room on the second floor in the Pavilion, these unpaid DJs take the reins of the station's format for two- or three-hour time slots.

KANM has programs for almost all kinds of music fans. One show plays all Broadway tunes, while another features heavy metal. Other formats include jazz, reggae and New Age music.

Steve Noreyko, a junior chemistry major, has been a DJ at the station for about a year. His show, "St. Alphonzo's Pancake Breakfast," includes many different kinds of songs, but most fall in the category of New Age, he said.

"I got the name for my show off of a Frank Zappa album," Noreyko

said. "I think he's vulgar and weird, and I like to play some of his stuff."

Noreyko plays mostly electronic instrumental music. He said the music is sometimes symphonic-sounding and sometimes obscure.

Most people, he said, don't know what "New Age" actually means, and Noreyko admits it is hard to explain.

"I play some slower, acoustical songs and some obscure instrumental rock, too," Noreyko said.

"I have a three-hour show on Wednesday from 9 p.m. to midnight," he said. "I got to pick the time slot and get to program all my music."

Noreyko brings his records from home because the station has a limited record collection. As assistant music director, he is in charge of New Age and jazz music and is able to look over records the station gets from distributors.

Noreyko found out more about the station at an introductory DJ meeting. He said the DJs describe the program they want to do, pay \$15 in dues at the beginning of each

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