

# RADIO WAVES

## KEOS brings community radio concept to B-CS

By Jay Knium  
THE BATTALION

In a building that looks like a cross between a house and a pawn shop sitting darkly on East 32nd St. in Bryan, radio station KEOS is struggling to keep the head of alternative music above water in an ocean of conservatism.

Radio station KEOS was born in a tiny chunk of donated office space behind Earth Art in downtown Bryan.

This station was the result of three years of work, since March 22, 1991, when Brazos Educational Radio was formed.

The KEOS Mission Statement reflects BER's goal since its inception: "To provide musical, cultural and informational programming which celebrates and expresses the diversity of the community."

As far as diversity goes, this station's format can't be described in a few short words. Flip the dial to KEOS 89.1 FM on a Tuesday night and you may hear bluegrass or vintage country. There is Israeli and Jewish music on Wednesday at seven, or Celtic on Thursday. On Friday, the vibe goes from jazz to hip-hop.

Heidi Halstead, the program director for the station, said that except for training and FCC guidelines, the programming is at the whim of the volunteer DJs who man the station from 7-11 p.m. Monday through Friday.

"Also, if listeners call in and suggest something to play, we're really likely to play that, whereas on commercial radio, they may not be likely to play Trout Fishing in America, or bluegrass or jazz. Commercial radio is very much dictated by the format they select."

Eric Truax, the president and general manager of KEOS, said that commercial radio is ruled by dollars, where KEOS is about people, not profit.

Truax, the station's founder, said that mainstream commercial radio was the source of his inspiration.

"The first glimmering of the idea was listening to what was on the radio, or to what wasn't on the radio, and realizing there was a serious need for alternative voices," he said.

Truax had been impressed by the diversity of radio in other cities where he had lived and worked, such as Dallas, Austin and Los Angeles. He said he had noticed the presence of small, college radio stations in these cities, particularly Los Angeles, and saw the need for such a station in B-CS.

Halstead said she became interested in KEOS because of her work in other radio stations.

"I noticed through my other radio work that there wasn't a really big drive for young people," Halstead said. She said her goal is to provide training in radio for children, teenagers and college students, as there aren't that many op-

portunities for young people to learn these things.

To help young people break into the "radio biz," KEOS has formed internship programs with various University academic departments. Wendy Albert and Erica Graff are interns working through the Department of Women's Studies.

Both are senior English majors at A&M, and both have been given the title of Director of Women's Programming for the station. Eventually, both Albert and Graff will host a two-hour show focusing on women's music.

Albert said their goal is to spotlight female artists who you don't generally hear on the radio generally. Getting specific, Graff said, "Definitely Indigo Girls."

"There are some other people out there — Michelle Shocked, Loreena McKinnnet," Albert said. "There are some women out there who have real issues they want to bring out."

Both said: "Nothing like Whitney Houston."

Graff did express fears that go with doing a show dealing only with women's music, particularly in a conservative climate.

"My view of how people view women's groups here is that their first impression is; 'oh, a women's group. Either they're male-bashing, or they're lesbians, or something like that,' but I really want this radio show to be for everybody."

Brad Alexander, who does the Underground Almanac, the station's hip-hop venue, said he came all the way from St. Louis, Mo., not to attend Texas A&M, but because he needed a change.

"I wanted to take a step back, take a look at myself," he said.

Through his show, which airs on Fridays at 9 p.m., Alexander said he hopes to teach the public about the difference between hip-hop and gangsta rap music.

"Tony, Toni, Toné! and Arrested Development are great hip-hop artists," Alexander said. "People like that, who have something to say. It's OK to bitch, but you'd better have a reason, something to help with the problem. If you're going to talk about a problem, you should have a way to fix the problem."

There was general agreement among the interns that KEOS will be good for the radio scene in B-CS.

"Radio here sucks," Graff said. "It's insulting."

All told, KEOS will strive to become the fresh air that it feels B-CS has craved for so long, mostly because of its difference and diversity.

"People need to lighten up," Alexander said. "Tradition is fine, but you should also look to the future. Don't be stuck in tradition, because it isn't coming back."

"Being different is not bad, it's better. If you've been somewhere I haven't been, then I want to know, because then I can learn something from you."



Eric Truax, station manager of KEOS.

Roger Hsieh/THE BATTALION

## KANM and KEOS

# Station emerges from FCC license struggle

By Jay Knium  
THE BATTALION

A generous helping of blood, sweat, tears and a dash of controversy — that's the recipe for radio station KEOS.

The station is the newest addition to the broadcasting scene in Bryan-College Station and seeks to provide an alternative voice for local radio.

The station is young — it only started broadcasting on March 25 — the station's Federal Communications Commission license was issued a year ago.

As they say, getting there is half the fun.

The official KEOS timeline details the long road traveled to set up shop, from its humble beginning as Brazos Educational Radio, through the numerous problems with applying for an FCC license, through struggles to find a location, to the final product — a 24-hour FM station.

What the timeline does not show is a past of friction between KEOS and the Texas A&M cable radio station, KANM.

KANM is a University-sponsored, student-run radio station that is based in the Koldus building. Because KANM has no FCC license, it cannot broadcast over the air, and is restricted to transmitting over cable lines. KANM listeners must hook their TV cable up to their stereos to get the signal. Aside from the costs of cable TV, getting KANM is otherwise free.

KANM is staffed only by A&M students, and has a University sponsor and adviser. The station's format is dictated by the individual student disc jockey's tastes. DJs get complete freedom to play whatever they wish on the two or three hours allotted to their show.

The student station is far from satisfied with cable status, and has long sought an FCC license, which would allow KANM to broadcast over the air and become a fully-fledged radio station.

Tim Sweeney, the associate director of the Department of Student Activities, was the sponsor for KANM through most of the station's struggle for a license. He said the station applied three times for a license, without success.

"The first time, they had problems with the engineering survey, because they (KANM) couldn't find a tower broadcast location," Sweeney said.

Sweeney said the obvious choice for a tower location would have been Rudder Tower, but all the antennae already jutting from Rudder's roof for CB radio and FM transmission would interfere with the signal.

The second application snag came with the engineering survey. Sweeney said that this time, the frequency KANM would broadcast on would collide with the signal from a Waco television station.

"I didn't realize that Channel 6 out of Waco reaches into north Bryan, but apparently it does," Sweeney said.

Then came the third application. In order for any application to be considered by the FCC, it must have a station Board of Directors. Since KANM had no board of its own, an impasse was reached.

On the one hand, the station could list then-president Dr. William Mobley, then-Vice President for Student Services Dr. John Koldus, and the station's adviser as the Board. On the other hand, the entire Board of Regents could be listed. Legal ad-

visers to the station were divided on the options, so the application was suspended.

Enter Brazos Educational Radio (BER). This organization was formed by KANM officers who were afraid of the possibility that the Board of Regents would become the station's board of directors, and thereby gain complete control over the station. Later, the BER organization made clear its objective to provide more alternative radio than that currently offered by the B-CS area.

Beth Kirkpatrick, a graduate botany student, was the program manager for KANM at the time of the BER license application. She said some students who were against the Board of Regents as directors felt that way out of fear of suppression.

"There were certain students at the station that felt that, if the Board of Regents were the directors, then they would take over and it wouldn't be a student station so much," Kirkpatrick said. "They didn't want that to happen. They wanted it to be more student-oriented, they said, and they wanted it to be more diverse than the Regents would want, and possibly more controversial."

Those certain students were then-KANM officers Eric Truax, Beth Weissinger and Janina Hurtado. These officers went on to form BER with the intent of acquiring an FCC license for a radio sta-

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— Eric Truax,

President and general manager of KEOS

tion independent of A&M's influence. That station would one day be called KEOS. Later, Heidi Halstead and Mark McCann were added to the BER roster, and Weissinger left the organization.

The story of the two stations got complicated after differences arose between KANM and BER. KANM is run completely by students, but BER's board included a student and members of the A&M staff, and the B-CS community.

Weissinger and Hurtado were the two students on the board.

BER pursued a license application on its own, but some KANM officers from the time they thought the license application was to be for KANM. Various fundraising benefits were held, from which both BER and KANM drew a percentage.

Questions about which group received or deserved money from fundraising or other sources have since led to confusion on both sides.

Sweeney said there is no trackable evidence that KANM had given any funds over to BER.

"There was some solicitation to get some funds from KANM to pay for some of the expenses for KEOS, but to my knowledge, I've never signed off on anything the whole time I was adviser," Sweeney said. "Not a penny was to go to either BER or, now, KEOS."

Janina Hurtado, a senior journalism major who has been involved with KEOS

since its beginning, said, "From what I can remember, there's been at least two benefit concerts," Hurtado said. "One which KANM sponsored, and BER also received some of the funds; but there was also a BER benefit where KANM received some of the funds."

Individuals from both sides agreed that misinformation and bad attitudes made the problems between KANM and BER even worse.

"I tried to give them (BER) chances (to meet with KANM)," Kirkpatrick said. "I invited them to a couple of meetings so they could present their case to the DJs."

Kirkpatrick said the meetings were geared to inform the student workers at KANM of events, since they had heard only rumors and stories.

"By then, because of the rumors that had been flying around, the DJs weren't that open to discussion," Kirkpatrick said. "The people on the BER board were defensive, which is understandable. I mean, you're in a room full of 60 people, and they're all glaring at you."

Truax, president and general manager of KEOS, also said communication was difficult in explaining BER's actions. He said attempting to combat the idea that BER used KANM's money for their own purposes was basically futile.

"I don't know where this conception came from," Truax said. "We've tried to go and talk to them time after time after time, but nobody wants to listen. Nobody listens. I've tried calling, we've tried going to meetings, we've repeatedly tried contacting them to set up a dialogue, but they're not interested in a dialogue. They've met us with folded arms and blank stares."

Even so, the general attitude on both sides seems to be one of acceptance or resignation. Now, both stations are just trying to take care of business.

Zack Coapland, the current student activities department adviser to KANM, said KEOS is still trying to set up some sort of partnership with the campus station.

"I've had a conversation with Eric (Truax) recently, where he wanted to get together and talk about what kind of relationship we could have, and what they could do for us," Coapland said. "That offer has no meaning to us."

Robert Anderson, the current station manager of KANM, said the relationship between the two stations is civil for the most part.

The differences between the two stations and their goals seem to stand behind many reasons for the split.

Halstead said KANM's focus has always been on students, while KEOS has a much wider scope.

"I think KANM really has their own priorities in terms of students, and putting students on the air," Halstead said. "Our vision of alternative community radio was a broader one."

Halstead said that whereas KANM's focus is students of A&M, KEOS chooses to represent the "student of life rather than the student of A&M."

Sweeney said the indecision over who to name as the board of directors was probably to blame as a basis for the problem.

"If everybody would have just calmed down and if we would have just put the Board of Regents down as the board of directors on that second application, and submitted it, I think we would have had it without a lot of trouble," Sweeney said.



Robert Anderson, station manager of KANM.

Roger Hsieh/THE BATTALION