

TOPPLING THE RADIO GIANT

New station KNDE 95.1 to offer competition to monopolistic Clear Channel

For many members of the Bryan College Station community, Mandy Moore could never replace Metallica nor could 'N Sync substitute for Nirvana. But that is exactly what will happen in a few weeks as Bryan Broadcasting, owner of local rock-format station, KTSR 92.1, will transform the rock station into "new hits" station KNDE 95.1 which will officially launch March 3, The Battalion reported Feb. 17.



COLLINS EZEANYIM

Rock fans in the B-CS area will be understandably upset by the transition. But there is a bright side to the news. KNDE 95.1 is positioned to compete directly with the popular Mix 104.7, Ben Downs, general manager of Bryan Broadcasting, told The Eagle. Mix 104.7 is owned by Clear Channel Communications, a villainous behemoth of a media advertising company that engages in monopolistic practices. The introduction of KNDE 95.1 will inject some much-needed competition with a local Clear Channel-owned station.

But Clear Channel's hold on the radio industry is staggering. According to its Web site, www.clearchannel.com, Clear Channel owns 1,225 radio stations in the United States alone. The online magazine Salon.com reports that Clear Channel "controls 60 percent of rock-radio listening." Clear Channel also owns Premiere Radio Networks, which syndicates shows by popular radio personalities such as Rush Limbaugh, Dr. Laura Schlessinger and Jim Rome.

Clear Channel is not one of the most reviled media companies simply due its dominance. Instead, its clear engagement in anti-competitive activities has earned it the righteous scorn of music lovers and radio listeners across the country. For example, in early 2001, Clear Channel sent letters to non-Clear Channel radio stations informing them that popular talks shows, such as Limbaugh's and Schlessinger's, would be moved to competing stations owned by Clear Channel, according to Salon. As Salon senior writer Eric Boehlert, who has written a series about the disingenuous aspects of Clear Channel, correctly pointed out, other large media conglomerates own syndicated shows but don't wield them in such a domineering way.

Clear Channel CEO L. Lowry Mays recently testified before Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.), who promotes legislation that would help independent radio station owners, that his company is not a monopoly and does not engage in anti-competitive practices, according to The Battalion. Boehlert has reported allegations of Clear Channel threatening record labels that it would pull promotions for a band from its airwaves or drop the band's singles from its playlists if they performed

at exclusive concerts or were exclusively promoted by competing radio stations. Mays' testimony also didn't take into account lawsuits charging Clear Channel with monopolistic and anti-competitive practices such as the one filed by small promotions firm Nobody in Particular Presents (NPP), according to Salon. Many critics have also charged Clear Channel with homogenizing its radio playlists and making the medium of radio bland. A study by the Future of Music Coalition has found that American radio listeners support policies that counteract this and other effects of radio consolidation, such as that done by Clear Channel.

Locally, in addition to Mix 104.7, Clear Channel owns country station Aggie 96 (KAGG-FM) and classic rock station Fox 99.5 (KNFX), according to the Clear Channel Web site. Mix 104.7 broadcasts with one of the strongest signals in the B-CS area, according to the radio station search engine radio-locator.com.

In challenging Clear Channel-owned Mix, KNDE is facing a formidable challenge. But it plans to fight fire with fire.

KNDE will broadcast from Bryan with a power of 50,000 watts, according to The Eagle. This is the same amount of power that Mix possesses. In addition, early broadcasts on KNDE have explained that the station will be the only one in the B-CS area to use a 100 percent digital audio chain in processing its music. This will heighten the musical clarity for its listeners.

Radio listeners should support KNDE, if only to dilute the Clear Channel monopoly somewhat. It would send a powerful message to Mays if a radio station owned by his own company is beat in a ratings battle in the same area where he received his undergraduate education.

KTSR 92.1 was an outstanding station that will be missed by many Aggies and local residents. But its premature death will not be in vain.

Switching formats to directly compete with a Clear Channel-owned station is a worthy goal. Even if it comes at the cost of an excellent station, the Clear Channel juggernaut must be stopped.

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major. Graphic by Leigh Richardson.



MAIL CALL

Reville's lead not to be confused with a muzzle

In response to Esther Robards-Forbes' Feb. 21 News article:

About your article "Reville returns to duty," where you state "Also a first for A&M's mascot is a muzzle, deemed a 'gentle lead,' which prevents her from biting and keeps her head straight while she marches ..." I have a few comments to make.

First and foremost, a "gentle lead" is not a muzzle in any way, shape or form. It is simply a device, similar to a halter that a horse may wear, that aids in training a dog while on lead. It is used to maintain control of the head and usually requires less force (as opposed to tugging on a lead that is affixed to a traditional collar).

Unfortunately, to the uninformed it may appear as a muzzle simply because of its location. These are not muzzles! Many people have been worried to approach a dog wearing a gentle leader because it appears as such and you aren't helping the situation! Second, a gentle leader does absolutely nothing to prevent a dog from biting. Look at the position that it is worn on the nose! A dog wearing a gentle leader is fully capable of opening its mouth and biting whatever it wishes.

Gentle leaders may help an owner gain control of a dog's head quickly, and pull it away from the situation, but I guarantee you that if I stuck my hand in the face of an aggressive dog wearing a gentle lead, I would be just as likely to lose a finger as I would if it was wearing a traditional collar and lead.

Please try to remember that a gentle leader is merely a training device that does just that and nothing more.

Laura B. Lemke
Class of 2004

Tipping a necessary part of restaurant dining

In response to Melissa Fried's Feb. 20 column:

Miss Fried's idea that an automatic tip takes away a server's motivation to give high quality service comes from ignorance of the serving profession.

Just like any other job, a server's motivation to create an enjoyable dining experience is fueled by their desire to keep their job. If a manager sees a server giving poor service (for any reason) they would be stupid to keep that server as an employee.

After 9 p.m., few people come in, and they generally eat little and stay until closing. If someone comes in at 9 p.m. and stays till 11 p.m., and leaves a \$2 tip, that server has just made \$3.13 an hour. That's well under minimum wage, and not worth the time or effort put into it.

The solution presented is just as bad as the "problem" presented. Raising hourly wages is no different than requiring people to tip. By the logic of Miss Fried, this raise would take away a server's motivation to give decent service. Perhaps the only solution is for people to be fair when tipping, and taking into account all the variables of service.

Mark Stein
Class of 2006

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebatt.com. Attachments are not accepted.

Democratic party in trouble

Since Al Gore conceded the presidency to George W. Bush in December of 2000, following the closest election in history, the Democratic Party has perpetuated a slow and continuous process of protest. It began with challenging the legitimacy of Bush's presidency, followed with criticizing his dealings with business, tax cuts, and the environment. Sept. 11 proved to be a respite while Democrats quieted to present a united front free of partisanship. Before long, however, the Democrats were back at it, openly questioning the president's motives in the war on terrorism and contesting his policies regarding Iraq and North Korea. A ubiquitous overture to these criticisms has been endless jabs at the President's intelligence. Amid such criticism, common knowledge suggests that the Democrats would have someone in mind, a candidate worthy of their support who could take charge and lead our nation during these trying times.



NATHAN ROGERS

In reality, however, there is no knight in shining armor. The Democratic Party is currently home to 18 potential candidates for the 2004 general election. Of course, not all of these citizens will make it on the ballot for all the primaries, and many of them may not even formally file their intentions to run. It is imperative, though, that to even stand a chance at unseating an incumbent president, a strong candidate must rise to the top. The current list of aspirants runs the gamut from moderate to radical, readily identifiable to obscure, and potentially formidable to downright ludicrous.

Among the hopefuls are some recognizable people. For example, Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, Gore's running-mate in 2000, made a public announcement to pursue the Democratic nomination shortly after Gore withdrew his name from candidacy in December. Lieberman has

received criticism from some Democrats because of his strong support of Bush's policy regarding the war on terrorism and Iraq. However, some feel that he would appeal to more conservative centrists in a general election. Because of his name recognition and established donor base, Lieberman is in the first tier of candidates.

The Rev. Al Sharpton, a familiar face and name to most Americans, tossed his hat in the ring for the presidency for the first time. An avowed liberal and self-proclaimed enemy of the Democratic leisure class, Sharpton intends to "take out" this segment of the Democratic Party, which he believes undermines the well-being of minorities and the poor. According to Time magazine, Sharpton sees the 2004 campaign as a chance to displace Jesse Jackson and "take on the mantle of black leadership in America." But Sharpton stands virtually no chance of receiving the nomination.

Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts toyed with the idea of running against Gore in 2000, but Gore's early endorsement by prominent Massachusetts Democrats put an end to these notions. Kerry is a veteran who worked extensively with John McCain in the 1990s to normalize relations with Vietnam, and is a frequent supporter of the President's military policies. However, on social and fiscal issues, many in his own party feel that he lacks a connection to the public.

Not all of the electioneers are prominent names. One relatively unknown Democrat is Lyndon H. Larouche Jr. of Virginia. The 80-year old activist will be conducting his eighth campaign in 2004. Larouche has been associated with the Socialist Workers' Party and founded the U.S. Labor Party. In 1979 he moved his affiliation to the Democratic Party, and has remained on the fringes of it since. He won up to 4 percent of the vote in

several primaries last year, but was denied the right to have delegates at the Democratic National Convention by the Democratic National Committee.

Howard Dean, M.D., the former governor of Vermont, has worked to distance himself from Bush's stance on issues of the economy, tax cuts and the war on terrorism. In 2002, Dean did not seek re-election to a seventh consecutive two-year term as governor, and instead started a political action committee, paving the way for him to explore a 2004 presidential run.

Another name that many Americans are unfamiliar with is Gary Hart, a former senator from Colorado. Once a rising star on the political scene, Hart ran an underdog campaign against Walter Mondale in 1984, winning New Hampshire and several other important primaries before ultimately losing the nomination. When Mondale was destroyed in a landslide during the general election, Hart was seen as the front-runner for the 1988 — until he was accused and subsequently photographed participating in extramarital affairs. Since his departure from politics, Hart has been primarily practicing law and working as a consultant.

Second-guessing, belittling, and outright criticism of the current administration has become commonplace in Washington and across the nation. Entertainment personalities and prominent public figures speak out freely against the president and his policies. While this is most definitely their right, and they undoubtedly feel that they are doing their part to better their country, they are falling short in this regard. Without being able to produce a worthy and able replacement or challenger to face President Bush, the Democrats are sealing their fate for the 2004 presidential election.

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