

NEWSROOM:
(541) 346-5511
E-MAIL:
ode@oregon.uoregon.edu
ON-LINE EDITION:
www.uoregon.edu/~ode

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Ryan Frank
EDITORIAL EDITOR
Kameron Cole
Stefanie Knowlton

PERSPECTIVES

Eugene radio is hardly music to the ears

Local stations lack nothing in effort, but ultimately leave college students yearning for fresher airwaves

Opinion



Ashley Bach

Like so many forms of media, radio delivers to a near captive audience. We can only hear what is available to us, and have little control — save for a few song requests — over what we hear in the future. This fact is all the more frustrating in a city that, frankly, is sorely lacking on the FM/AM dial. With few exceptions, in fact, the more I listen, the more I know one thing.

Eugene radio sucks.

Many of you already realize this, I'm sure; the rest of you will discover it in the months ahead. As for me, I just did the math. In Portland, where I'm from, there's one alternative station, one Top 40, one hard rock and two for softer alternative. In the Bay Area, there are two alternative, one hard rock, two rap stations and many others. And in Los Angeles, the choices are even more plentiful.

So what does Eugene offer to the average college student? Three very limited choices: 95.3 KNRQ for alternative, 104.7 KDUK for Top 40 and 88.1 KWVA for "college radio." The sheer numbers alone are troublesome. How often have we flipped through the dial and found nothing to our liking and then settled on a sub-par station?

Unfortunately, variety isn't the only problem. Eugene may not be a big enough market to support more stations, but it's certainly big enough to support some quality. Alas, that's hard to find in the three-horned monster called Eugene college radio. Let's run down the choices:

95.3 KNRQ: Otherwise known as "The Q," this amateurish and ultimately annoying station seems to best capture the musical tastes of most college students. But that's really no consolation.

The DJs, for the most part, are laughable. Chia, whose voice too many college students have been exposed to, is always a chipper sound in the afternoon, but ultimately grates with her self-centered chat and technical foul-ups. And Jenny-O, who's thankfully been banished from the morning show, sounds like she just walked in off the street.

Even worse, KNRQ tries hard to portray itself as cool, rebellious and a little off-beat. They've got the weird part down, but they are neither cool

nor rebellious. The stupid promos they run, with the movie clips and that guy with the deep voice, are transparent attempts to build an image. Let's just play the music.

104.7 KDUK: This station is notable not only for its non-existent DJs but for its most visible audience (excited 14-year-olds). I've listened to KDUK for three years and don't recall any of the on-air personalities. This isn't such a bad thing, however; considering the ones I have heard have been devoid of any personality.

But, for college students, this is a tough choice. We're old enough to have focused our musical tastes, so the hodgepodge of songs and artists KDUK throws at its listeners is hard to absorb. One minute I'm hearing "Building a Mystery" by Sarah McLachlan; the next, it's "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica. If you're not into R&B or soft alternative, turning the dial is inevitable.

As with most radio stations,

KDUK's innumerable call-ins, giveaways and contests are another good reason to tune out. And this station gets the local award for worst treatment of its winners. They force their listeners to recite the "phrase that pays," a terribly patronizing request that degrades people into saying, "Today's best music: KDUK." No wonder their big audience is teenagers.

88.1 KWVA: Honestly, I get scared every time I listen to this station. The musical choices are, for lack of a better word, weird. I realize this is "college radio," nurturing artists outside the mainstream, blah, blah. But I just don't get it, and I don't think I'm alone.

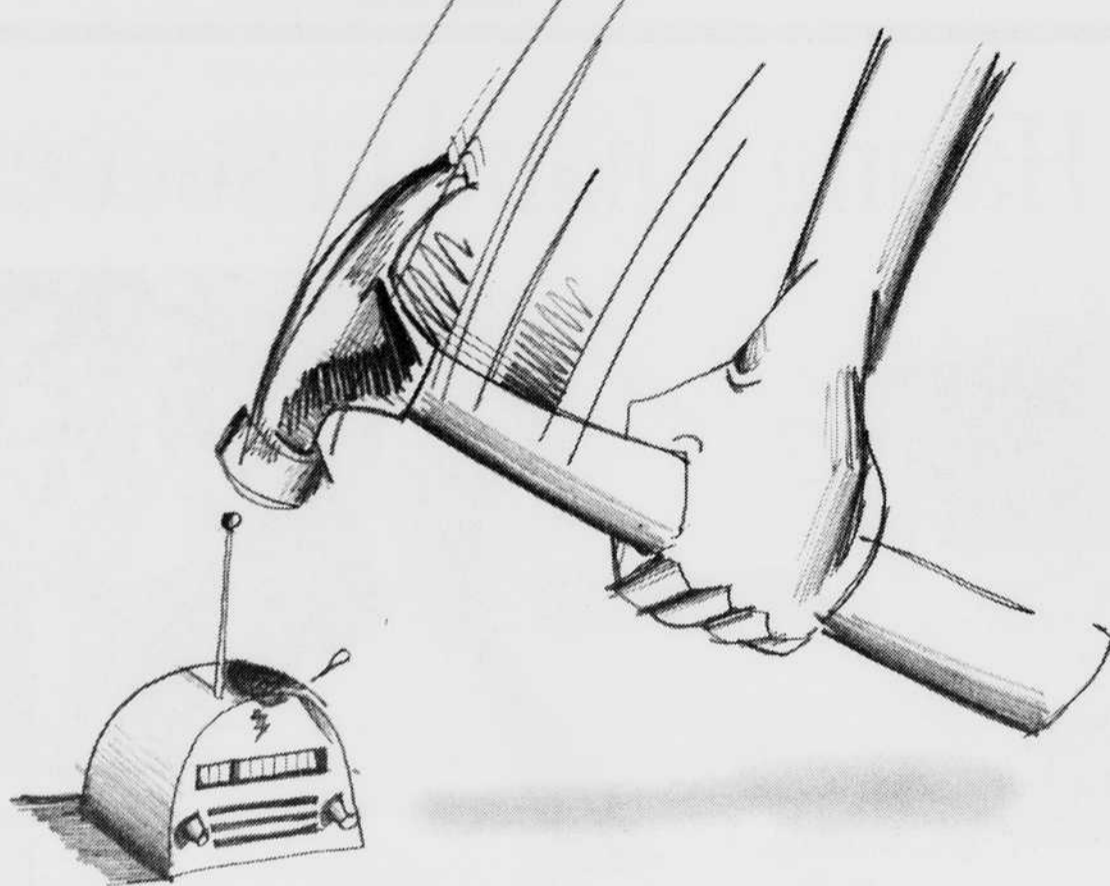
That said, I'm proud of these guys. All college students, they're able to put together a 24-hour station on dated equipment with a fairly varied programming schedule. They've got talk, several specialty shows and news. The DJs are eclectic but spirited. And plus, KWVA doesn't have to pretend

it's a professional station. It's a training ground.

Unfortunately, for all these virtues, one is still left with the general playlist, which I think turns most college students away. It's unfortunate that KWVA can't be a more widespread choice for the student body. We definitely need it. Then again, the crew up there in the EMU probably doesn't mind being on the artistic fringes.

So what are we left with? Two stations trying to pass themselves off as professional, and one that's trying real hard, but doesn't really capture a greater audience. For the average college student, it doesn't make for a very hopeful listening future. My only advice: Buy a lot of CDs and sell your radio to somebody who can really enjoy it.

Ashley Bach is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.



CORRECTION

The story "It's time to put the past behind us" (ODE, Nov. 5) should have read, "On Bidwell's 10-yard kick."

The Emerald regrets the error.

LETTERS POLICY

The Oregon Daily Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Letters must be limited to 250 words.