

Hey Mr. DJ

Radio personality takes
a brave step out of the closet
by Julie Sabatier



TIM GUNTHER

When Mitch Elliott said, "The weather's nice out here," he wasn't talking about the mild West Coast winter. The new co-host of *The Daria and Mitch Show*, a weekday afternoon drive-time radio program on 105.1 FM The Buzz (KRSK), came out of the proverbial closet on the air Jan. 31 after 20 years in radio.

Elliott, 42, has been open with his family about his homosexuality since he was a teenager. He was out to friends and co-workers at KLSY in Seattle, where he hosted a morning show for three years, and before that in his native Atlanta at WFOX, where he spent 16 years honing his radio skills.

Elliott gained a reputation as an accessible, funny guy's guy radio personality, who enjoyed talking about sports, his two dogs and his hobby flying stunt kites. He tended to

downplay his fondness for dance music, however, and never mentioned the fact that he hasn't missed a Pride parade since he was 19. He always seemed to be single, despite his popularity with female listeners.

"Radio's great because of the anonymity of the whole thing," says Elliott. "You can go out clubbing on the weekend with your boyfriend and you don't have to worry about anything, because they don't necessarily know who you are, [but] I always felt like if I can tell my mom and my dad and my brothers and sisters and my grandparents, why can't I tell my listeners?"

He explains that he was never exactly forbidden to reveal his sexuality but that it was understood in Atlanta that it was something better left unsaid on the air. Ironically, Atlanta is now home to *Radio with a Twist*, the first nationally syndicat-

ed commercial radio brand targeted toward a gay audience. *Twist* co-host Melissa Carter was one of the first openly gay hosts of a mainstream show when she joined *The Bert Show* on All the Hits Q100 in 2001.

In Seattle, however, Elliott says he was "pretty much told that was probably not a good idea" to come out to listeners. He continued to delicately select his pronouns, which was no small challenge in a format that depended on discussing personal relationships on the air.

"Management felt that that could hurt the show," says Randy Lane, a morning show consultant who worked with Elliott in Seattle and helped him craft his coming-out sketch for *The Buzz*. "We played up the ambiguity of his sexuality [in Seattle]. We never said he was gay or straight and he kind of played this metrosexual and I think people wondered."

Mitch Elliott
clowns around
with co-host
Daria O'Neill (left)
and producer Ted
Douglass.

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