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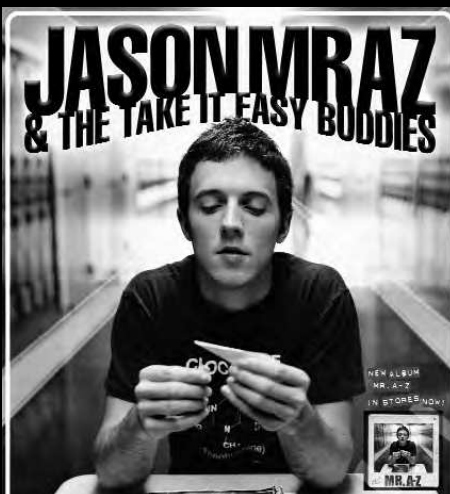
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pick up again, Barton says, “‘Car Talk’ is, whatever you think about it, a much more popular program in terms of the listenership for it.”

“Some people don’t like us using audience data, but it’s better than using cocktail chit chat to decide what we should be doing,” Heine says.

But community members such as

the station grew, reaching more towns across the state, the station tried to pull board members from those towns. But as it became more evident that not much was getting accomplished at the meetings, Barton says it was hard to keep asking people to drive great distances to attend the meetings.

Barton also says there is a desire to

‘We’ll listen to what people have to say, but it doesn’t mean we’re going to agree and respond to it. There are so many different opinions that it makes it hard.’ — Steven Barton

Hollman and Zupan totally disagree.

“They may say that the Arbitron ratings say people love the show,” Zupan says, “but that just goes to show how out of touch they are.” He believes that the people who make the programming decisions need to sometimes pick shows that do not appeal to everyone, again citing the need for a labor issues program like KBOO’s.

Heine stands by his statement that “it’s the listener who’s the most important person in the equation.” He notes that KLCC’s listeners feel extremely invested in the station because of its history in the community. But he says his decisions will undoubtedly not please everyone. “Anything I decide to do is going to violate some stakeholder’s feeling of right,” he says.

Currently, all of the programming decisions at the station are handled by Heine, Sommer, Michael Canning (the music director), and Barton. Heine says he bases his decisions on a combination of Arbitron data, listener input and his own 20 years of experience.

But that doesn’t help Hollman and the other community members like her who still feel slighted. Hollman says she joined the advisory board, which was unofficially disbanded about seven years ago, at the invitation of Heine. Hollman counted herself as a dissatisfied listener after “Pacifica News” and “This American Life” were discontinued. According to Hollman, Heine says the advisory board would be a good place to register her complaints and try to get these shows back on.

“I wanted to put my two cents in and what I found was that nothing occurred at those meetings and there were very few meetings,” she says. “It appeared to me that it was a waste of my time and that they were doing it because it was on their by-laws or something.”

Barton says a number of years ago, public radio stations were required to have an advisory board in order to receive money from the Corporation of Public Broadcasting. He argues that they maintained the committee for a number of years after that, but found it to be ineffective. As

bring the advisory board back, but notes that making programming decisions based on that kind of input is difficult. “We’ll listen to what people have to say, but it doesn’t mean we’re going to agree and respond to it,” Barton says. “There are so many different opinions that it makes it hard. Who are you going to serve? It may appeal to a lot of people but it may turn other people off.”

Heine was even more critical of the board. “The advisory board wanted to tell me how to do my job. They wanted to talk about programming and the advisory board needed to be advising the station,” he says. “The problem with a community advisory board is how do you select people who truly represent more than just their own personal interests? And how do those people take on the charge of representing not just their personal interests and not the interests of their friends but of the 60,000 people who listen to KLCC.”

Siporin somewhat agrees with Barton and Heine in this regard, but goes on to say that they would have meetings with staff members where programming issues were discussed, but no votes were ever taken. “I think that if you’re trying to run a place day to day and a lot of people who want to give input are only there once a week as a volunteer, you have to move more quickly than that. And I think that a lot of the decisions can’t go through the democratic process. Somebody has to say this is my area of expertise. But to have zero democratic input is just flat out wrong,” he says.

Jenny Newton, a former KLCC staff reporter now living in Portland, also sympathizes with Barton and Heine and the difficulties they face in making station decisions. However, she says, it seems as if they’re betraying the community model that KLCC once stood for. “I guess I can understand what Don and Steve are saying about running a business. But the tradition that we worked so hard to build at KLCC was about doing that [building a community model] through people feeling heard. We always sold it to our community at Radiothon that what they think matters,” she says. **EW**

Media Watchdogs

The Eugene Media Action Committee is a local media watchdog group that has been working with KLCC management for years, providing input and advocacy for news and opinion programming. The group holds regular monthly meetings in Eugene and the next is 5:30 pm Thursday, Nov. 3 at Growers Market upstairs, 454 Willamette.

“We welcome old and new folks concerned about media bias, and really putting the public back in public broadcasting,” says David Zupan. For more information, call Zupan at 484-9167.