

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

New Radio Station goes Full Signal

BY JAKE THOMAS

In a constricted office lined with cardboard boxes brimming with a sundry assortment of CDs, Denise Kowalczyk hunkers over a computer. She types at a keyboard very deliberately while clicking at a mouse, causing sporadic bursts of sound to blast from the speakers as she carefully constructs a podcast of a live performance.

The small room in the heart of Gresham is office, but what's been brewing in this small space has been heralded as a new fixture in Portland's music scene.

It's been a slow ramp up of fundraising, recruiting volunteers and forming community partnerships. But the vision of a handful of residents of the Portland area for KZME, a radio station that doesn't just reflect the community it broadcasts to, but sounds like it, made a big leap forward when it began broadcasting on last month on 107.1 FM.

Hailed as a way Portlanders can actually hear the music their city has become so famous for, the fledgling radio station could be poised to do more. It could build bridges between communities further to the east of the Willamette and central Portland, while also giving a platform to artists left out of the spotlight in the city's indie-saturated music scene.

KZME is an uncommon radio station, as are the circumstances that created it. In 2008, the Federal Communications Commission made a rare move by making noncommercial broadcasting licenses available for nonprofit organizations on unused radio bandwidth. A handful of local community groups banded together to successfully apply for a license for an open spot on the dial under the purview of MetroEast Community Media—the cable public access organization for the metro area's east side.

Rob Brading, the CEO for MetroEast, described the FCC opening as a "literally once in a lifetime" opportunity, and said that acquiring the license fit squarely in his organization's mission to expand public access on the airwaves. The vision for KZME was a "public square," said Brading, that would be an inclusive and organic form of community radio.

Like similar stations in Seattle and Salt Lake City, KZME was conceived as a radio station that would play local music from local artists and local record labels, and would



Denise Kowalczyk, director of organizational advancement, for KZME puts together a podcast in the MetroEast headquarters in Gresham.



Cliff Stanford, who DJs under the name DJ Klyph, hopes the new non-commercial FM station KZME will be a growing venue to air local hip hop groups.

broadcast local events, in a city where only smatterings of Portland's music scene could be heard on the radio.

Shortly after getting the license, MetroEast also got a permit to build a transmitter on Mt. Hood for 91.1 FM with the help of a \$85,000 grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. A large donor stepped in to make a \$50,000 donation, and pledged another \$50,000 for building a studio in downtown Gresham and other costs associated with starting up the station. About the same time, KZME also got a translator for 107.1 FM so that it could better reach inner Portland.

A buzz began to develop around KZME. But the station repeatedly pushed back its launch date, while it grappled with the logistical problems of getting on the air, primarily, the construction of the studio and transmitter, said Kowalczyk, the station's director of organizational advancement.

"Rome was not built in a day, nor is a noncommercial radio station," she said.

With KZME finally taking the airwaves, the station's personality

will begin taking shape. So far, KZME has been closely coupled with "indie" music—a term Kowalczyk is still wrapping her head around.

But there's more to Portland's music scene than white guys in skinny pants strumming guitars, and there's more to the Portland area than the imagines typically conjured up by the mention of the city's name.

Cliff Stanford, also known as DJ Klyph, has been involved with KZME early on after hearing about

the station while co-hosting the music show "The Underground" on MetroEast.

"I think we really want to try to bring to the airwaves and to the masses something that's not already being brought to the masses, so that's going to include people who aren't on major labels, people who haven't gotten a lot of the promotion thus far," said Stanford.

A native of New Orleans who made Portland home 16 years ago,

Stanford grew up listening to Run-DMC, Grandmaster Flash and other pioneers of hip hop. He hopes to use the station to bring the sounds of local artists that share a similar authentic, independent ethos that marked the art form's earlier days to listeners.

"Hip-hop was a little bit different from when I was a kid, and I sort of want to bring that piece back," said Stanford, sipping on a bottled water at Lents Commons.

MISS BLACK OREGON 2011

THE CROWNING EVENT



TARGETING EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 27TH 6:00PM

1512 SW MORRISON ST. PORTLAND OR. 97205

1ST PRIZE SCHOLARSHIP
SPONSORED BY:
MELVIN BROADOUS
WWW.MELVINBROADOUS.COM



Hosted By: *Jurina Autry*

2ND PRIZE SCHOLARSHIP
SPONSORED BY:
MARINELLO SCHOOL OF BEAUTY
WWW.MARINELLO.COM

@ Scottish Rite Center
FULL BAR * GOOD FOOD & DRINKS IN THE "GRAND LOUNGE"

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT CHRISTOPHER'S GOURMET GRILL

3962 NE MLK JR. BLVD. * 503-939-4643

FOR MORE INFO. CALL: 503-839-6222

