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Monday, May 10, 2004

## More 97X memories

As the self-described "Future of Rock and Roll" - which, in 1983, became the first local station to play songs by such now-established groups as U2 and R.E.M. - prepares to become part of rock history, here's what's on the minds of some listeners, friends and staff.

**Jenny Rosenfeld, 28, listener/ex-Cincinnatian, Playa Del Rey, Calif.:** I became obsessed with music (albeit, not great music - I was a Q102 fiend) when I was in seventh grade. Gradually, I started becoming bored with what I was hearing on the radio. Then, through a friend, I discovered 97X. She (the friend) was the coolest person I knew my freshman year in high school, so I asked her what she listened to. She said 97X. I said, "Huh?" I went home that day after school and tuned it in on my stereo. My stereo has never been on another station.

**Greg Dulli, former leader of the Afghan Whigs:** When I was a teenager, I would listen to WOXY nonstop. The DJs befriended me, encouraged me to push it musically and finally let me come up to the studio to spin records in the middle of the night. Sometimes I would play side one of *Van Halen II*, just to light up the phones and (anger) the punk rockers.

**Bob Burns, 33, listener, Lindenwald, Ohio:** The sounds of 97X captivated me and influenced me to no end. Half of my CD collection was introduced to me through WOXY.

**Susan Schreiber, 47, 97X sales manager:** I was working for this station in Dayton called WAZU. I hated the music ... hard rock or heavy metal. I was driving my production director home one day and he says, "God, you don't even have our station programmed in." I was like, "I know, I can't stand to listen to it."



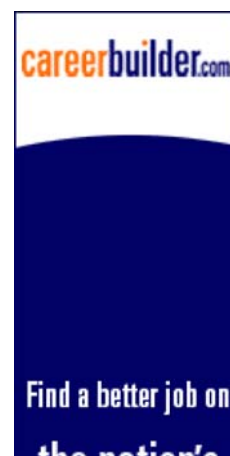
And he goes, "What kind of music do you like?" And I said, "I heard this song once called 'AEIOU and Sometimes Y,' (by Ebn-Ozn) and he's like, 'I know that song.'" Then I said, "There's this guy called Elvis Costello." And he goes, "You're an alternative-head. This is something you're going to like." He switched my station to 97X. I couldn't believe it. In 20 minutes they had played six songs, and four of them I loved. I became a huge fan and about three months later I called and

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**Mike Taylor, 40, 97X program director:** I think as the Future of Rock and Roll, one of the things we try to do is to be ahead of the curve, not necessarily on bands that were going to do mega-sales, but at least critically acclaimed and appreciated bands. We were one of the very first stations in the country - maybe the very first - to playlist Coldplay.

**Brad Stenz, Moth lead singer:** WOXY was one of, if not the, very first station in the entire country to put our new single ("I See Sound") into rotation. They started the snowball effect. From there, the radio adds started piling up from city to city. I couldn't believe it.

**Luann Gibbs, 38, Franklin, host/listener:** The day Mike e-mailed me and asked if I was interested in a part-time position was one of the best days of my life. 97X was the main reason I'd chosen broadcast media as my focus in college. Getting not only to work for the best station in the country - maybe even the world - but to be able to choose my own playlist was nothing short of nirvana for me.

**Matt Sledge, 31, assistant program director and local music director:** More than anything else, Doug and Linda have created one big family, and it's really not a corporate environment. We're free to do what we want as long as we get things done. It's just "do your job and do it well."

**Bryan Miller, 29, [www.woxy.com](http://www.woxy.com) general manager:** It's just a really special place to work. Whether you listen to it or not, just knowing that it's out there and that something like this can survive just kind of gives you hope. I think it stands for a lot more, and I don't think it's just radio. It kind of in a way stands for the fact that there are some people out there who do things for the right reasons still and aren't just looking to make a profit at any cost.

**Matt Sledge, assistant program director:** You knew it wasn't going to last forever, but you just didn't expect it to be right then. Doug and Linda are doing the right thing. ... They told us, "Here's what we're going to do, we have a plan, and we're going to go out in three months."

**Brad Stenz, Moth singer:** Yes, the station was sold. Does that make the station sell-outs? Let's face it, there are different ways to "sell out." At least the owner simply took the cash and walked away. The station didn't start taking more and more payola as they slipped in more and more Top 40 hits. We didn't wake up one day and it was suddenly, "Splat, the Apocalypse of Rock and Roll. Boom, another pop station is born." We woke up one day to find 97X was soon to be no



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**Mike Taylor, program director:** (The Baloghs have) been the castle in the sand for a long time. I certainly understand at this point in their lives they would want to move on, and I absolutely have no problem with that. I mean, "Mom and Pop" became "Grandma and Grandpa."

**Juliana Salinas, 26, listener, Carlisle:** For the past eight years, WOXY has been the only radio station I've listened to. It's ... provided a place in its message boards for music-loving people of the Tristate and the entire world to come together and discuss everything from current book reads, to the new Loretta Lynn album, to *American Idol*, to which presidential candidate we're backing.

**Barb Abney, 34, mid-day DJ:** It's amazing to me how the people who listen to 97X can't be put into one classification. It could be the guy who doesn't look like he's been out of the house in five years because he's been programming code, or the 68-year-old grandmother who comes to our shows and it's like, "Are you here with your grandchild?" "No, I love the Beastie Boys!"

**Susan Schreiber, sales manager:** We used to have this Elvis statue that one of our interns spotted at a yard sale on his way into work. It was for sale for \$660. Our "Breakfast Club" guys at the time, Rick and Dave, mentioned it, and Doug (Balogh) threw in \$97 and (in three days) they raised \$660 from listeners.

**Chris Schadler, 34, Southgate House promotions manager:** Although I've never been able to pick up the station in this city (Newport), I know that they've been the kind of asset that has helped keep Cincinnati's head above the indie rock waters. Oftentimes 97X opens a window to some act I end up pursuing to play at the Southgate House.

**Matt Shiv, 28, 97X music director:** I discovered the station in between my seventh- and eighth-grade years of junior high. I lived in Preble County, on the outskirts of where the signal would come in, and I had to position the stereo in my room just right. 97X really shaped my musical tastes over the years and I knew that I wanted to work there. I was incredibly lucky to get my dream job within six months of graduating college. Being an eternal optimist, I'm still holding out the hope that we experience a last-minute save to keep the online broadcast going. It's still very hard to think that this could all just disappear.

**Bryan Miller, [www.woxy.com](http://www.woxy.com) general manager:** I'm not going to know what to listen to. I don't pick out music, I don't go find music, I don't read anything. This place is such a time-saver because I don't have to go search anything out. I just automatically assume that if it's good, we're probably playing it.

**Susan Schreiber, sales manager:** The thing I'm going to miss most? I'm not going to be cool anymore. That sucks. Being Susan from 97X - I really liked it.

**Steve Gibbs, listener:** The day it disappears off the airwaves is going to be an incredibly sad one. But as I am reminded by an old "Calvin (and Hobbes)" cartoon: "If good things lasted forever, would we appreciate how precious they are?"

**Barb Abney, DJ:** I keep telling everybody that if it's done and I never spend another day in radio, I am so lucky to have had a job that is tearing me apart this much when it's gone.

**Greg Dulli:** The (annual Modern Rock) 500, the 97Xposure (Local Band of the Year contest), the hands-on recruiting of fringe acts to come play to a musical scorched earth (southern Ohio), was an inspired display of gallantry. The inevitability of this happening to such a righteous wild card saddens and angers me. But the age of innocence is as fleeting as true love, and it was better to have 97X for as long as we did than to not have had it at all. So, viva WOXY. You messed me up good.

**Bob Burns, 33, listener, Lindenwald Ohio:** I remember a little 13-year-old Bob Burns being tired of all the music he was being fed in 1983. So, he took an adventure and started adjusting his dial to find new sounds. The sounds of 97X captivated me and influenced me to no end. Half of my CD collection was introduced to me through WOXY.

**Luann Gibbs, 38, listener/host of "Back to the Future Saturday" on 97X:** When I was still in high school in the early days of the station, I had an antenna strung all around my bedroom so I would be able to listen whilst doing homework and giggling with my friends on the phone. I remember working on a school project in my bedroom the first time I heard (Camper Van Beethoven's) "Take the Skinheads Bowling" and laughed out loud. I went out and bought the album the next day. Ditto for (R.E.M.'s) "Radio Free Europe." It was so refreshing to hear great music day in and day out.

**Kathie Lucas, 37, traffic manager and sales promotions director:** I won't work in radio, I'm pretty sure. I'm not trained - I mean, I'm trained as a traffic director, but it would never be the same. I guess it's time to grow up and get a regular job. And everybody says, "You have a regular job," and I say, "No I don't. I don't wear suits. I bring my kid. You can bring your dog." It's an interesting office protocol.

**Luann Gibbs:** When I moved out, the first thing I did when I got to my new place was find the best position for the stereo so that I could pick up the station. Most of my friends did the same when they moved into dorms and apartments. I knew the exact spot on the highway where the signal would drop on my way to Wright State (just past the Dorothy Lane exit on I-675). How many times was 97X along for the ride when I went to parties, concerts, friends' houses? EVERY time. I was such a total 97X-geek that I wore two of the key rings as earrings when I was in college.

**Brad Stenz, leader singer in local band MOTH:** As far back as I can remember if I was listening to the radio I was

listening to 97X. Hell, the only reason I turned on my radio was 97X. Everything else was and still is crap! Unfortunately I think what has transpired lately is a very big sign as to what has already happened to the majority of the music in this country...big business.

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**Brad Stenz, MOTH:** I guess it doesn't matter if you're a musician, a fan of music, a business mogul or what, if you wanted to know what really unique music was and who was playing it, you turned to 97X for the answer. For years and years, WOXY was the beacon and lit the way for anyone seeking out true original rock & roll. Now that light is burning out and I can't name a single person who doesn't feel the emptiness that it leaves behind. I have no eloquent way to say that 97X is the greatest, coolest station in the country and the fact that it's closing totally sucks.

**Julie Stockman, 33, listener, East Walnut Hills:** Years ago, I ceased to listen to radio because it became too boring. Only when I moved to Cincinnati and found 97X, I turned the radio back on. Unfortunately, after May 13 my commute into work will be quiet once again. I am so grateful that I was able to listen to such a fantastic radio station and be exposed to all the wonderful music these past three years. I am also thankful that I know what radio is supposed to sound like. I feel for the up and coming generations who will turn on their radio and never know that they have any other choices.

**Susan Schreiber, 47, 97X sales manager:** I was working for this station in Dayton called WAZU. I hated the music ... hard rock or heavy metal. I was driving my production director home one day and he says, "God, you don't even have our station programmed in." I was like, "I know, I can't stand to listen to it." And he goes, "What kind of music do you like?" And I said "I heard this song once at this party called "AEIOU and Sometimes Y," (by Ebn-Ozn) and he's like, "I know that song." Then I said, "There's this guy called Elvis Costello." Well, I got to like the third song and he goes, "You're an alternative-head. "This is something you're going to like." He switched my station to 97X. I couldn't believe it. In 20 minutes they had played six songs, and four of them I loved. And I didn't even know what this music was called. I became a huge fan and about three months later I called and asked if I could have a job.

**Steve Gibbs, 46, listener, Franklin :** When I first heard the station I almost couldn't believe the variety of sounds that were being played, or the acts that were spun back to back. WOXY effortlessly manages to be completely cool without

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**Mike Taylor, 40, 97X program director:** I think as the future of rock 'n' roll, one of the things we try to do is to be ahead of the curve not necessarily on bands that were going to do mega-sales, but at least critically acclaimed and appreciated bands. We were certainly one of the first in the country to play the Strokes. The same thing with the Hives. We were one of the very first stations in the country - maybe the very first, to playlist Coldplay.

**Susan Schreiber, sales manager:** There was a party called a Day in Eden, and one year we had the Judybats and the Goo Goo Dolls. They were going to cut the power at like 7 o'clock. The bands all got there late. By the time the Goo Goo Dolls were on, the manager of the Judybats went out and was pointing to his watch and saying, "You guys have got to get off stage," and they were like, "We just got on stage." Well, one guy decked another guy right on stage, the bass player takes off his guitar, throws it down on the ground and proceeds to yell to the crowd - and he's giving them the finger - "This town sucks! This town sucks!" And the crowd takes up the cheer, so they're yelling back, "Yeah, this town sucks!"

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**Juliana Salinas, 26, listener, Carlisle:** For the past eight years, WOXY has been the only radio station I've listened to. It's ... where I go to hear new music, and older music that I missed growing up. I honestly believe it's the best radio station in the world. WOXY has also provided a place in its message boards, for music loving people of the Tri-state and the entire world to come together and discuss everything from current book reads, to the new Loretta Lynn album to *American Idol*, to which presidential candidate we're backing.

**Barb Abney, 34, midday DJ:** It's amazing to me how the people that listen to 97X can't be put into one classification. It could be the guy who doesn't look like he's been out of the house in five years because he's been programming code, or the 68-year-old grandmother who comes to our shows and it's like, "Are you here with your grandchild?" "No, I love the Beastie Boys!"

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it's good, we're playing it, so I don't even need to concern myself with it.

**Barb Abney:** I'm going to look for work, obviously. I'm going to take a little bit of time to just kind of get over the fact that OK, I'm not going to wake up and drive 48 miles to work today. I love music and I just don't know what else to do. I really don't want to go back to waiting tables full-time. I love music, I love radio. But nothing will ever be 97X. Nothing, nothing.

**Susan Schreiber, sales manager:** The thing I'm going to miss most? I'm not going to be cool anymore. That sucks. I'm 47 years old. It was going to be hard for me to continue to be cool for much longer anyway. Being Susan from 97X - I really liked it.

**Steve Gibbs, listener:** The day it disappears off the airwaves is going to be an incredibly sad one. But as I am reminded by an old Calvin (and Hobbes) cartoon: "If good things lasted forever, would we appreciate how precious they are?" It's a question and answer all in one.

**Barb Abney, DJ:** I keep telling everybody that if it's done and I never spend another day in radio, I am so lucky to have had a job that is tearing me apart this much when it's gone. I am so lucky to have had a job that I love so much that it feels like a member of the family is passing. There are so many people in this world that don't even have the opportunity to like what they do, so I'm blessed.

**Greg Dulli:** The (annual Modern Rock) 500, the 97Xposure (Local Band of the Year contest), the hands-on recruiting of fringe acts to come play to a musical scorched earth (southern Ohio) was an inspired display of gallantry. The inevitability of this happening to such a righteous wild card saddens and angers me. But the age of innocence is as fleeting as true love, and it was better to have 97X for as long as we did, then to not have had it at all. So, viva WOXY. You messed me up good.

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