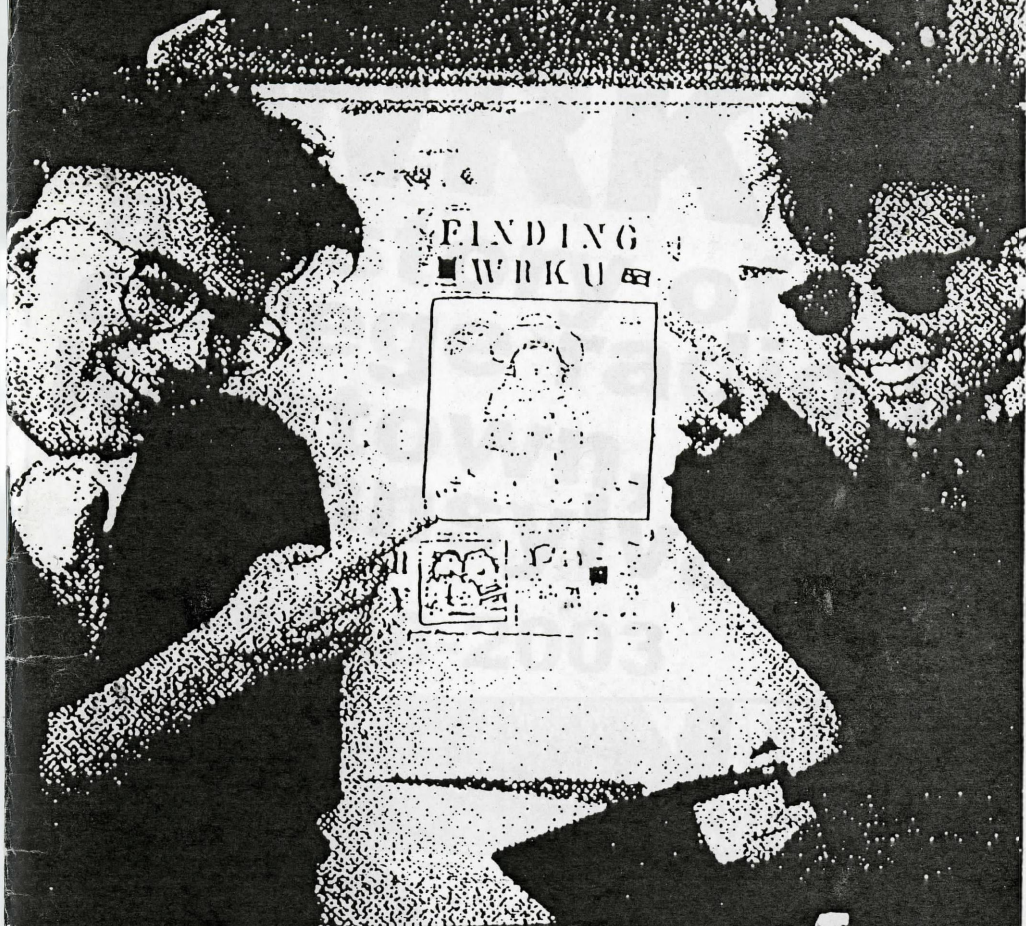


free!



a history of
college radio in
Kutztown,
Pennsylvania

Finding WRKU:

**a history of
college radio in
Kutztown,
Pennsylvania
1948-2003**



WRKU staff members-outside
Rothermel Hall station-1988

WRKU

PURSUING THE ALTERNATIVE



Invading the air waves
of Kutztown University.



640 AM CAMPUS
102 FM CABLE

KU-TV
CHANNEL 28

Request Line 683-4058

ad from late '80s

Researched, collected, compiled, and jabbed out
by lew houston in the fall of 2003
laid out in the winter of 2003
printed in the winter of 2004
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for additional copies send \$1 for postage to:
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edited by Mike Yannich

introduction

I spent hours in Rohrbach peering at microfilm. Days really. I was there so much my friends started stopping by to say hello. I was buried in the upper corner of the library where no living beings dwell and still I could get no peace and quiet. So much for hiding. Or keeping a secret. They would ask why I was wasting so much time looking at microfilm. I'd tell them I was researching the campus radio station. They'd have no idea it ever existed. I'd resume my task with renewed vigor.

I would have loved to talk to actual staff members. But they don't tend to stick around here. Unless they're me (I was on the staff from '99-'00, then not again until '01-'02, then off and on until the spring of '03). I had a lead on one station manager from the mid-'90s. He was in, Philly they said. Squatting in some factory. Nailing down an address became futile.

With no one to talk to I relied on Kutztown's only weekly record of events: The Keystone. Not always the most accurate (but always hardworking and deserving of our admiration) it is at least dependable. Not so dependable are the library's microfilm records. There were often large gaps of several years missing, but nothing too detrimental to the project.

I didn't bother with citations (shoot me now). You can bet any direct quotes as well as paraphrased factual information was taken directly from reporters' stories. My apologies to them for not ripping their names back out of history. My retribution will certainly be the sudden and permanent burial of my own. My only other sources were the Keystone yearbook (for pre-1960 information), the radio station zines (used for the section pertaining to them), and my own first hand experience (utilized in the paragraphs dealing with the years I was involved). Most photographs were robbed from The Keystone as well (except group shots which came from The Keystone and the cover shot which came from the "Tales of WRKU" zine). This time I offer apologies to the already under credited photographers.

This is my version of the history of college radio in Kutztown, Pennsylvania from 1948 to 2003. I hope you like it. If you don't you should write your own. Just don't tell your friends where you're going.

♥lew

**To the countless staff members of Radio Forum,
WKSC, WRKU, and WKUR: For all your constant
and under appreciated struggling.**



**the first staff of Radio
Forum-1948**

history

The first headline devoted to college radio in Kutztown, Pennsylvania read:

APRIL 13, 1967

NUMBER 13

WKSC Goes On Air; Problems Abound

WKSC began broadcasting on Monday, April 3, after a trial run Tuesday evening, March 28. Things have been going better than had been expected, according to [unclear] Records and Paul Brown Associates. In addition, they have thirty tapes from Radio Moscow, as well as records from Radio Nederland.

That was 1967. During the next thirty-six years very little would ever change.

Prior to scrolling through miles of microfilm I always held the notion that there was a golden age of college radio in Kutztown: a significant span of time when the station was well organized, well staffed, and loved and listened to by the entire student body. However, it seems that the station's very first headline would become an appropriate headline for nearly every story penned about it for the next thirty years.

Just a glance at one roll of back issues of The Keystone reveals that the station was always jumping through hoops, on the verge of falling apart, attempting to gain student support, dealing with hassles from the administration, and not making very much progress. There were several years of growth, popularity, and success but these were always punctuated with years of inactivity and decline.

For many area universities radio is one of the strongest media forces on campus. For Kutztown it has always been a struggle. But it's always been a valiant struggle fought by a few dedicated kids who loved music or radio or just struggling. One could ponder for pages the various reasons college radio was stifled in Kutztown – as the countless editorials printed semester after semester in the Keystone attempt. But my goal is to document not make guesses or list theories.

The fact is that throughout its thirty-six year existence college radio in Kutztown has never crawled up out of the ground. It has always been the underdog, the annoying pack of kids playing with wires and stacks of wax. Nearly always jabbing the administration the wrong way (both accidentally and sometimes very much on

purpose). And there's nothing wrong with that. It was this underdog status that allowed them to give students a voice and an alternative to more bureaucratic, non-student empowering campus organizations.

But before Kutztown college radio could attempt to grow, give students a voice, or piss off the administration a seed had to be planted. That was done in 1948 when Kutztown University was Kutztown State College and the idea of college radio was a little further in the future. However, radio was a huge force in popular entertainment and media. Therefore it wasn't strange that KSC had a radio club by the name of Radio Forum (in 1958 it would become the Radio TV Club). The group sponsored speakers from the field of radio and even prepared and performed radio broadcasts at local stations. The club seemed meagerly popular and existed through most of the '60s.

By March of 1967 college radio was very possible and the spirit of Radio Forum gave birth to WKSC, the first college radio station in Kutztown. When it first began the station had 400 records (mostly rock and roll, mostly donated by students) and were on the Columbia records mailing list. The station's format was determined by a survey taken in 1966 in which most students replied they would like to hear rock and roll with Broadway shows the second choice. The station's original offices and on air studio were located in what was then the basement and old poolroom of the student center (now the John B. White Multicultural center (see walking tour section for more)).

Within the first few weeks of initial broadcasts came that first headline declaring "Problems Abound." The problems were caused by faulty turntables, which forced the station off the air for a week until they could be replaced. Equipment would continue to plague the station. A reporter in the Keystone said, "most of the parts and materials that were used to build the original studios were hand made from anything the parent engineers could get their hands on. Most was Army surplus which didn't work to begin with."

In addition to equipment woes the founding staff would be the first to encounter two other problems that would plague the station for the rest of its existence: lack of funds and the inability to broadcast to all of the dorms. The station began its broadcasts at 640 AM on the dorm dials but was set up as a carrier current station. Carrier current used cables to carry the signal from the station into the electrical system of the dorms. This did not require a broadcasting antenna or as many FCC regulations but also meant only students in the dorms (or sometimes cars passing very close to the dorms) could hear the station and not always that well.

At that time (and pretty much for the entire history of the station) the station could "be received only to the residence halls [except for 'the extremities of the girls' dormitories (Deatrick and Johnson)'], the old student center, and parts of Old Main. In order to pick up the station students must have plug in radios or they must



the first four-WKSC staff-1967

place their portable radios next to an electric light switch or wall socket" (other tricks in the future would include turning the lights off or wiring a radio to the radiator. This amount of effort was most likely not exerted by the majority of students, drastically cutting down on the station's audience.)

At the time carrier current was a fairly new technology but many thought it was just a temporary solution until they could raise the money for an antenna and FCC licensing in order to gain real space on the FM dial. In September 1968 the station set up a committee aimed at "investigating the possibility of converting WKSC to an FM station." It would also provide the student government with a breakdown of the cost of new equipment needed to convert to FM broadcasting.

The arguments for FM would be repeated over and over for the next thirty years: an FM station would reach more listeners including townspeople and students living off campus. This would help create a sense of community between the town and the college. FM status would also help make the station a more visible media force able to keep students up to date on campus activities, closings, etc.

Despite a constant grasping at the FM straws and a severe lack of listeners, the station continued to add new shows and come up with ways to interest students. In the late '60s they played jazz, soul,

rock and roll, easy listening (a "special show") and had a call in show where students could ask questions of the administration.

In order to be a DJ a student had to "have a voice that will project, a good personality, must know what is going on in the whole music field, and must have time to spend listening to records and forming a show so that there is no "dead" air during his [or her] particular show, and finally must hold a third class FCC license and minimum of five hours training under the personnel of WKSC with the equipment."

Despite strict DJ training dead air was still a problem in the station. Even with nearly twenty DJs filling time slots broadcasts were sporadically shut down due to a leaky roof that caused water to pour down the walls and onto the wooden support that contained the carrier current wiring. Staff also found difficulty with the lack of space. This was a problem that would need to be remedied as the record and equipment collections grew in the coming decade. While water and space plagued the station money did not. In 1969 the radio station received the most money out of all of the organizations on campus (\$3,700).

When discussing my plan to research and write a haphazard history of college radio in Kutztown many people thought I should include background on what was happening on campus and how this influenced the station. Knowing my tendency for tangents I decided against it. It didn't seem necessary to give background because the main generational movements that influenced other American colleges had a similar influence on Kutztown's campus from 1967 to the present. So I don't need to tell you that in the early '70s the campus was flooded with protests (including the 61 black students (the entire black population of the school!) who took over Old Main in protest over unfair treatment! (Where has all the fighting spirit gone these days?). And folk music, hippie rock, classic rock and progressive rock were the music styles of choice (and, it's worth noting that lots of big name bands like Yes, Aerosmith, Stevie Wonder, the J. Geils Band, the Allman Brothers band, and Peter Frampton were brought in to play on campus. Regardless of your particular opinion of any of these bands (some not so widely hated during those days) it shows that the campus was more supportive of music and music lovers during past decades than it seems to be today.). Whatever happened during those decades was sure to be reflected in the radio station both in what it played and how it functioned.

Early in 1970 the plaguing hand built equipment was replaced with "the latest radio broadcasting equipment." This made it comparable to most commercial stations and all college stations in the Allentown-Reading area. Later in the year money would again be allocated for new equipment. Most of this was spent on a new carrier current transmitter that supposedly allowed the station to reach all

WKSC Top Ten

WEEK LAST	WEEK THIS	TITLE SONG	ARTIST
11	1	This Girl is a Woman Now	Gary Puckett
18	2	When I Die	Motherlode
10	3	Everybody's Talkin	Nilsson
2	4	Sugar, Sugar	Archies
25	5	Tracy	Cuff Links
9	6	Hot Fun in the Summertime	Sly and Family Stone
7	7	Wedding Bell Blues	5th Dimension
5	8	Jean	Oliver
1	9	Little Woman	Bobby Sherman
	10	Green River	C. G. R.

WKSC charts and staff-1969



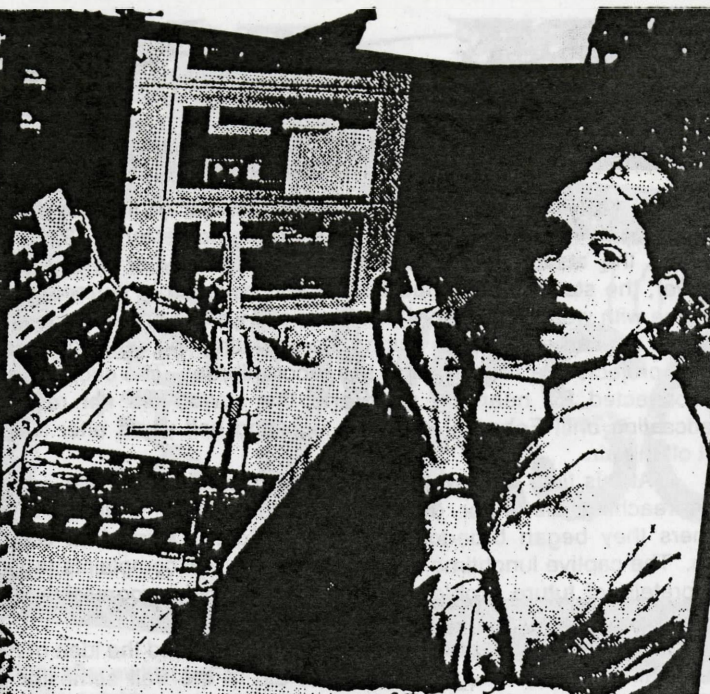
those living in campus housing.

In 1973 the station gained new management and staff, had a record library numbering in the thousands, was cleaned and painted, and got a new format described by the station manager at the time as "a mixture of the best of Top 40 hits and album cuts, with local news features, public interest announcements, and special programming." Later in '73 a newly appointed general manager complained of apathy and poor management on the part of the staff. Again the past echoes throughout the future. This would become a common complaint amongst students and administrators when discussing the station for years to come.

In 1974 the station hit another snag with the carrier current system when the wires originally installed in 1967 began to deteriorate. The leaky roof and resulting water seepage added to the problem and caused the station to go off the air indefinitely for over two years. Lack of cooperation on the part of the company responsible for laying new cable caused even further setbacks. Again little or no interest on the part of the students and poor bookkeeping on the part of the staff helped to draw out the temporary dead air. Allegations were made that the station died of lethargy and that many treated it like a "toy" rather than a viable media outlet.

In 1975 the station manager stepped down and handed his keys over to the advisor stating he would help instruct any new station managers that would take his place. In the Fall semester of 1975 a meeting was held in which a member of the student government board proposed that instead of re-laying the rotting, ineffective cables an economic plan should be made to convert the station to FM. The advisor argued that the technical advancements and time required of students (he was very pessimistic concerning student support, not believing students would be able to maintain an FM station) would be too great to make this conversion. They stopped all discussion of the problem until a staff could be established.

It seems that for the very first time college radio in Kutztown was without broadcasts *and* without a staff. In December of 1975 an editorial appeared in the *Keystone* written by perhaps the first Kutztown punk. He chided the Top 40 format of most current AM stations (the equivalent to today's FM) and the way they seemed to "play out" a handful of songs on every station. In his tirade against placing "money before art" he even advocated smashing radios! Punk rock! His solution? "To promote free radio, which is best exemplified by college radio." This opinion would gain strength throughout the late '70s and '80s with the birth of punk rock and the independent/Do It Yourself approach to making music. The author discussed the fact that Kutztown still had a radio station and that it is they who can save the airwaves. He ended his rant with "WKSC: Where the hell are you?"



Inside on air studios-1972

WKSC RADIO

WKSC radio has been in existence for

Side by si
Back and
All the go
dropped
Soon the

Maur



Sprouts t
Stand by
vital,
Landscape
masculi
Full-sized

Walt

most of the staff -1977

A reply appeared in the very next issue of the Keystone, which came out in the beginning of the Spring semester of 1976. At that time the station had been off the air for a year and a half. However, the station finally had a staff and new carrier current cable (this time with weatherproofing!), but was still waiting on connectors to complete the carrier current. During the downtime the staff worked on "inside" projects like reorganizing the record library. The cables were not connected for nearly a year and the station did not resume broadcasting until February of 1977, two and half years after it first went off the air.

At this time they were broadcasting with lower power, which made reaching the outer dorms impossible. Due to the loss of listeners they began broadcasting in the South Dining Hall during lunch. The captive lunchtime audience made a few complaints (again this foretells of future problems), which led to only progressive jazz and mellow rock being played during lunch hours.

It seems that every time the station got settled the idea of FM broadcasting reared its ugly head as it did in the Fall semester of 1977. The push for FM during the late months of 1977 and most of 1978 would become one of the greatest runs the station ever had at conquering the FM giant. Meetings were held, funds were appropriated, the staff worked their asses off, and arguments were made and remade. Actual FM broadcasting was passed up for cable FM broadcasting in conjunction with Berks County Cable over a "stereo microwave link that would allow people to hear a virtually distortion free stereo signal" by hooking a cable to their stereo receiver.

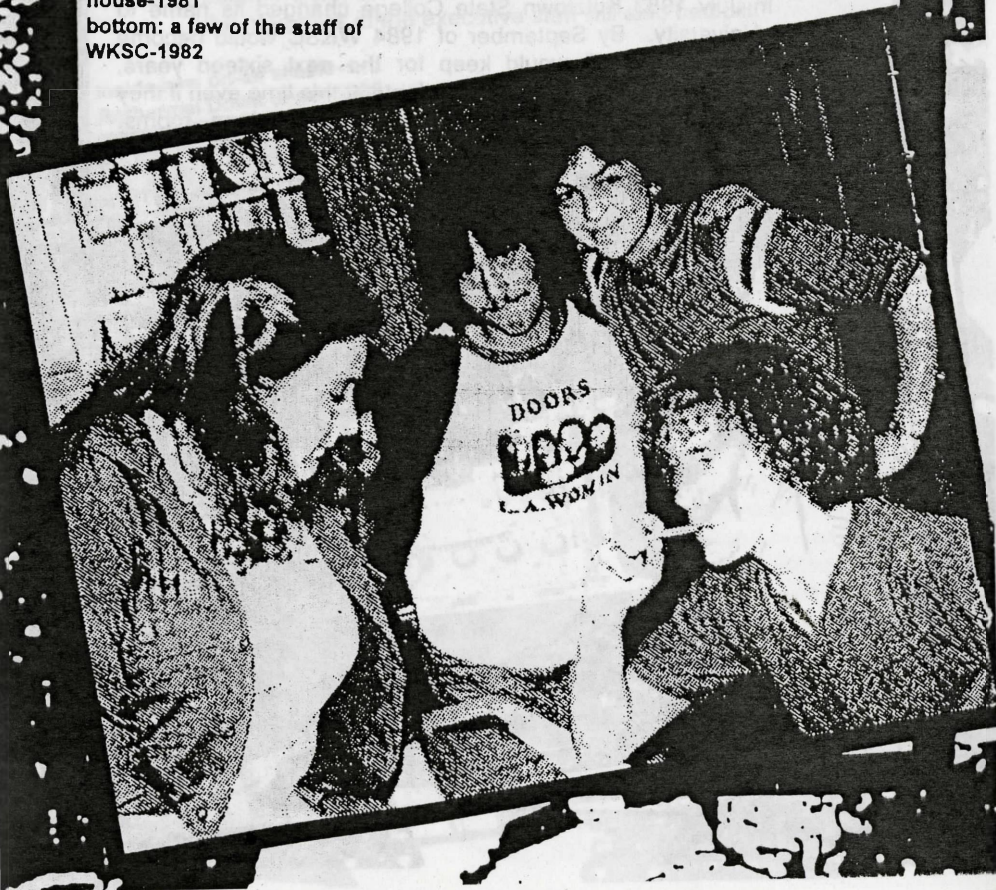
The plan was to set up a separate studio for the purpose of cable FM music broadcasting while keeping the old AM carrier current system in order to continue broadcasting information to the students on campus. Just as WKSC seemed on the cusp of gaining a broader range of listeners (even if not the desired "real" FM broadcasting) the project was delayed. This time the problem was not lack of student support, staff apathy or even water leakage. For the first time it was bureaucratic tie-ups. There were two cable companies involved in this new venture and one of them was giving the station trouble over royalty payments involved in broadcasting recorded music over the cable lines.

In February of 1979 they still had not completed the FM cable project and did not expect to have it completed until the following semester. This time they were waiting on physical cable connections again delayed due to neglect on part of the cable company. An article outlining these difficulties made the statement that the station had come a long way in its ten plus year existence "[b]ut now, as then, the legacy of broken promises and erroneous red tape lives on." It's an all too appropriate summary of the station's problems from that point on

640A 102 FM
WKSC

top: after switch to FM
cable-outside original White
house-1981

bottom: a few of the staff of
WKSC-1982



(anyone involved with the station then or at any time since (especially the late '90s) cannot help but exclaim "hell yes!" when they read this quote).

The royalty situation seemed to clear itself up but Berks cable was now worried about liability insurance should the station offend any listeners. The insurance would nearly deplete the station's entire budget every year and was not even necessary. Nearby Albright did not utilize it for their FM cable broadcasts.

There are a lot of gaps in The Keystone microfilm records directly after 1979 but at some point the station overcame their problems. By October of 1982 they were broadcasting on 102 FM cable and 640 AM, and had not yet given up the battle for real space on the FM dial.

During the early '80s the station remained much the same. They were still looking for staff members and listeners. They were playing hits from the Billboard Top 100 and in '83 the station was referred to as "a progressive rock station" by one of the staff members. J.R., a DJ of the week, gave insight into the station at this time: "I feel WKSC is on its way up. For the short time I've been with them, I've seen nothing short of improvement. Record collections and promotions are becoming more and more expanded to keep up with the student body's requests."

In July 1983 Kutztown State College changed its name to Kutztown University. By September of 1984 WKSC would become WRKU, the call letters it would keep for the next sixteen years. WRKU seemed to be popular among students at this time even if they couldn't all tune in to its broadcasts from their dorm rooms.

taking requests-1985

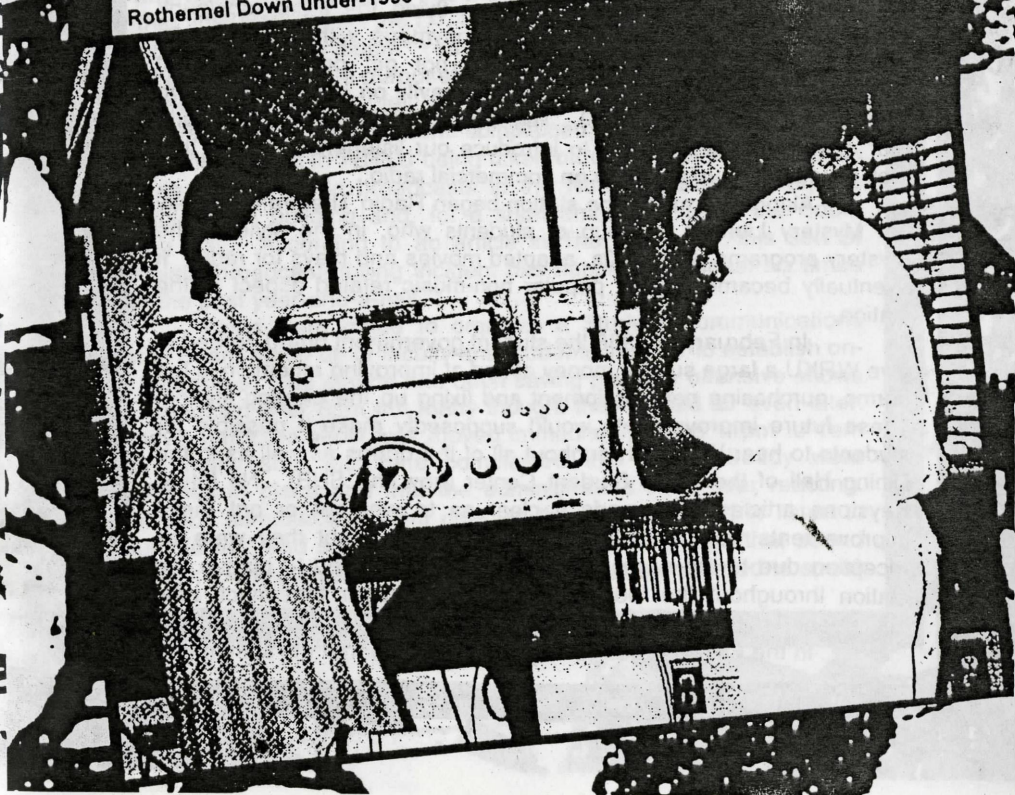


Apparently the improvements in the carrier current system did not truly help the station reach all of the dorms. In fact Old Main, Bonner, Johnson and Berks could not receive the station during the early '80s except through the FM cable (which involved hooking a cable line into a stereo receiver and was therefore not utilized by many students). Again talk of broadcasting over an actual FM frequency was discussed.

During the spring break of 1986 the station would finally escape from the bowels of the John B. White house and move straight into the bowels of its next-door neighbor Rothermel Hall. While the staff had been championing a move for years due to cramped space and water leakage the move was actually made so that the residence life office could install dorm rooms in the basement of the White house. Fortunately the move did create more space for the station. A Keystone article outlined the new space:

"basic plans include the addition of walls in the Down Under (Rothermel's recreation room) for offices and two studios. Studio A will contain both turntables, cart machines, a mixer, a microphone, and all the albums. Studio B will contain all the equipment used for production of WRKU promos, commercials, and other station needs. Offices for the members of the executive staff will also be built."

Inside new on-air studio-
Rothermel Down under-1990





so many they needed a ladder-the huge WRKU staff of 1987

In the mid '80s WRKU began flying the indie rock/punk rock/DIY banner that had become synonymous with college radio (most of these forms of music could not get or did not want mainstream airplay and therefore relied heavily on college radio who was more than happy to help). The music director at that time said, "our new format is intended to introduce our listeners to music that they would not be exposed to on commercial radio."

Along with music the station began Radio Theatre (originally the Mystery Library) a group of students who, in the style of the mystery programs of the '40s, adapted movies and plays for radio. It eventually became a fairly popular non-music related aspect of the station.

In February of 1988 the student government board agreed to give WRKU a large sum of money aimed at improving reception in the dorms, purchasing new equipment and fixing up the existing station. These future improvements would supposedly make it possible for students to hear WRKU throughout all of the dorms as well as in the Dining Hall of the North Student Center (now the SUB). No future Keystone articles ever made it clear as to whether or not these improvements were actually made. I tend to doubt they were as reception due to the carrier current system continued to plague the station throughout the '90s and it did not appear that much new equipment had been purchased since the '70s.

In the Fall of 1989 the Keystone reported that the station had

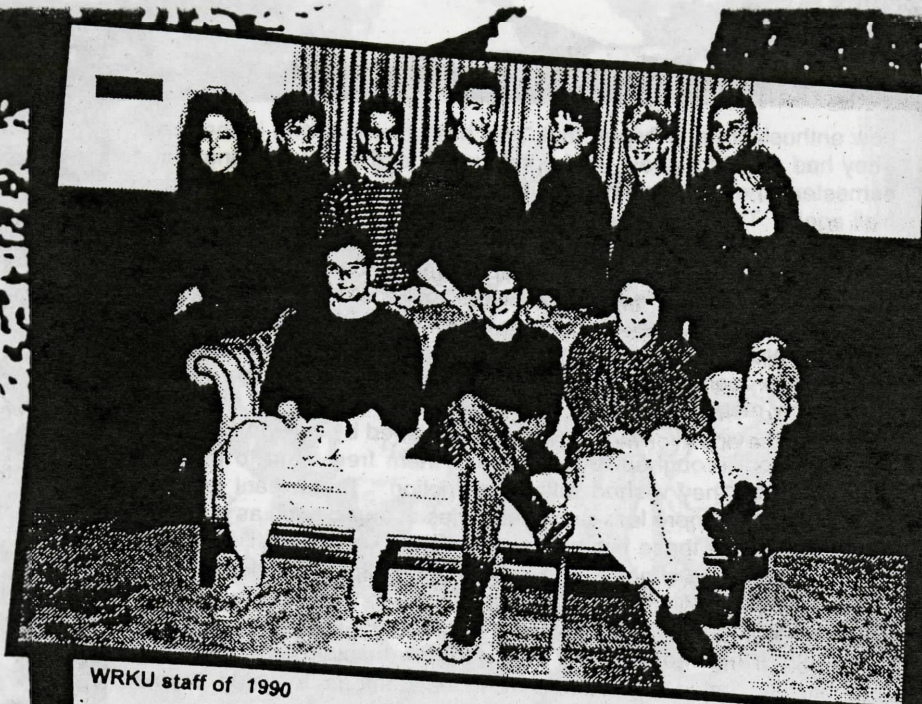
new enthusiasm and "vigor" that "may have been lacking in the past." They had set strict goals, had good turnout at the first meeting of the semester, and were making plans to broadcast in the South Dining Hall again. There were renewed discussions about the switch to real FM broadcasting.

In March of 1990 the station again seemed ready to make positive changes and "broaden WRKU's horizons" but complained that not many students knew there was a radio station (again a common problem throughout its history and even today). The station at this time had an open format and made it known that "if someone wants to hear heavy metal they should come down and sign up for a show."

The open format that was so cherished by college DJs in the late '80s and throughout the '90s gave them free reign to play any style of music they wished without restriction. That meant less and less Top 40 and more less-accepted styles of music such as punk and hardcore. It was these two genres that nearly knocked WRKU off the air just as the '90s got rolling. During this time broadcasts were expanded to the KU-TV bulletin board station so that anyone watching the KU-TV channel could listen to the station as it played in the background (not requiring the pesky stereo receiver cable hook-up). This allowed cable subscribers living off campus to listen to the station.

On March 14th 1990 at 8:30pm a Kutztown resident was watching the Golden Bear Sports show on KU-TV and left the station on afterwards thereby tuning into the "hardcore punk" show scheduled for that time slot. When the DJ, Sandy Kane, played "Blue Velvet" by Spit (from their 1989 album "You Would If You Love Me". Spit was/is really just Vinnie Spit, a purposefully offensive one man "comedy rock" punk/deviant), a song full of obscenities and other apparently offensive content, the resident complained to the university. The complaint resulted in WRKU being taken off of the KU-TV channel as well as cutting off its broadcasts in the North Student Center, the Administration building and, for a short amount of time, the South Dining Hall. According to an article in The Keystone "this sort of complaint/broadcast-pulling incident has happened at least six times over the past year-and-a-half."

Plans were made to organize a Student Communications Media Board made up of faculty and students in order to establish on-air guidelines. The station had been saving possibly offensive shows for broadcast after 8pm but many thought they should air even later. Sandy's hardcore show was moved immediately to an 11pm to 1am slot. Many staff members complained that there already were guidelines in place and that the administrators were over reacting. One such administrator went down to the station, asked to listen to "Blue Velvet," and said "they used such vulgar language that soon I was sick to my stomach." None of the administrators dared to speak



WRKU staff of 1990

the word censorship but kept stressing guidelines. Each issue of The Keystone had at least two editorials defending both positions.

At the same time that WRKU was madly screaming censorship and administrators were puking over vulgarity a bunch of students got drunk at a block party in the Cliffs and caused what the police called a "riot" but the kids called a "party." Whether "party" or "riot," it soon overshadowed the radio station's problems and no more editorials appeared. After summer break all remained quiet in The Keystone and forgotten by the student body. The cable station however, did not forget and the Fall semester found WRKU still desperately trying to get back on the KU-TV channel. They were by no means defeated and were expanding their format, buying new equipment, trying to improve the broadcast quality, and planning on making promotional items like t-shirts and banners. Again noise was made about switching to FM with complaints of lack of listeners due to bad or nonexistent reception. However, the switch to FM would still cost large amounts of money - more than the student government would ever be willing to fork over.

In February of 1991 a student wrote an editorial complaining that there was a lack of creative and original programming on WRKU. He proclaimed that the good days were gone when "[WRKU's] philosophy was that college radio should be truly different from the standard commercial fare." He was pissed that the word alternative now referred to bands like The Church and The Cure (many bands once nurtured by college radio in the '80s outgrew these meager

airwaves and went on to gain mainstream success. This pissed people off.).

A rebuttal from the staff claimed that there is indeed original programming but admitted that the "alternative edge has been blunted." They claimed that this was due to the Spit incident, which forced them to be extra careful about the types of music they play. After begging to be let back on the air they were told by a "puritanical" administrative staff not to let anything offensive on the air at all. Fear of being pulled off the air for good resulted in a hacking up of play lists and setting a new policy: "no questionable or offensive music is to be played at any time."

But the station hadn't given over to Top 40 completely as evidenced by the words of a staff member in December of 1992, "we are trying to expose our audience to music that they won't hear on commercial radio to let people know there is more to music than what is played on MTV." Nearly a year later an article appeared in The Keystone discussing independent bands such as Fugazi and Screeching Weasel and discussing zines like Maximumrockandroll, Flipside and Jersey Beat (all independently produced outside of the mainstream press and supportive of indie/punk bands). The article ended by reminding readers that WRKU focuses on playing indie bands.

In 1993, to keep things predictable, a lengthy editorial listed reasons why WRKU should make the conversion to stereo FM. This time the author added that they should be given space in the new Student Union Building as the Rothermel Down Under was "cramped and inefficient" (staff member Jack Ball would later share the fact that the university had asked the station if they wanted to move to the new Student Union. However, knowing they would actually have *less* space the staff had declined the offer). The arguments made were much like those made in 1967: real FM status would help foster community support by sending airwaves off campus and at the same time keeping all students informed of important announcements.

A particularly loud-mouthed student made a rebuttal to this editorial in his weekly column "Sound Off." Not only did he not think WRKU deserved FM status but he also thought "there should be a complete overhaul of how the station operates." His reasoning was that the station had a hard time following its own guidelines and did not follow current FCC broadcast standards. His example came from a morning show being broadcast at 10:45am in which the DJs played a song called "Drink Your Face Off" that ended with the sound of someone puking. Afterwards the DJs talked about puking and getting sick. The author was upset because he heard it in the cafeteria while he was eating.

The DJs' rebuttal corrected the author by stating that the song played was actually "Patios and Beer" by Random Killing. They

stated that the song makes fun of the over consumption of alcohol by youth and that they were trying to play music not heard on mainstream radio.

Later that same year this same radio show, "The Morning Chaos" show, received several other complaints from students eating in the cafeteria during its broadcast. The show was described as being similar to Howard Stern and contained commentary on issues ranging from the DJs' personal lives to world issues to entertainment and campus news. Many students, forced to listen to the show, posted complaints ("annoying, disgusting, vulgar, too loud") and even threats in the cafeteria and on the door of the station one of which mentioned one of the DJs by name and said "[he] will taste the blade of God."

Other letters said "writing to WRKU doesn't do much since [the Morning Chaos show] is still playing clips of people urinating (Tues. 11/26) and having discussions of people farting in elevators (Wed. 11/17)." Despite the complaints staff members stood behind the DJs saying it was one of the most professionally run shows at the station.

The main problem was that any student eating in the cafeteria had no choice but to listen to what was being broadcast. Another complaint gives insight into this fact and the mindset of some of the student body during this time: "I am forced to buy a meal plan since I live on campus. I don't believe I should be forced to listen to this garbage on WRKU when I eat. The disc jockey may like this shit but no one else does. Please turn it off and play music people like other than the jockey." In the years to come WRKU would eventually stop being broadcast in the cafeteria due to these types of complaints.

In April of 1994 college radio in Kutztown was silenced again when the executive staff, with urging from the advisor, decided to take it off the air temporarily due to "theft within the organization as well as managerial difficulties." The advisor stated that "students have been walking off with CDs and damaging equipment" and thought that this measure would encourage them to stop. He also wanted to take time to change locks and "reorganize the key-in situation." While it was seemingly the executive staffs decision to take the station off the air they expressed regret at the decision and didn't seem to be fully in charge of the situation. They stated that there were only a few staff members who were causing the problems while the rest were devoted and fully following station guidelines.

The station was back on air by the following semester and holding a "Band Blast" (that drew nearly 300 people!) in the SUB Multipurpose Room with local bands Plow, Bobby Cork, Creature Double Feature and Grieving Eucalyptus - all mostly made up of various members of the staff.

WRKU

PURSuing THE ALTERNATIVE

ANTI-SPIN DOCTORS SHOW

GRIEVING
EUCALYPTUS
OLD
MAN



bobbykork

SUNRUNCH

SMALL-MEDIUM-LARGE
ALL PROCEEDS
BENEFIT:
WRKU
640 AM
KAP Rock (w/100.3)

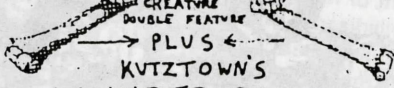
\$5! AT THE G-SPOT
STARTS AT SIX.



BOULEYARD OF
WRATH

AN ALL KV BREAKDANCE MOVIE WITH
AN ALL KUTZTOWN SOUNDTRACK
WITH...

THE BOBBY KORK GRIEVING EUCALYPTUS



CREATIVE
DOUBLE FEATURE

PLUS

KUTZTOWN'S

THUNDER DOME

NEW! SAME KV SOUNDTRACK BLOOD HOWL!
PROMS → PLUS →
1. GREG BRADY RIDES WITH LOWRIDERS
2. FAMILY TIES SKIPPY ALONG WITH LOWRIDERS
PER PERSON ONLY 1 DOLLAR. ALL MONEY
MADE GOES TO WRKU! OPEN TO
MUST BE 18 TO ENTER.

MONDAY

7-9 Freddie Flesch - Big Band, Jazz

9-11 Dean Agiato - Mountain

11-2 Bob Armstrong - Alternative

2-4 Tom Texter/Chiz Schuster - Alternative

4-6 Wayne Apsley/Mike Therriat - Classic Rock/Reggae

6-8 Marc Work - Alternative

8-10 Durin Smith - Classic Rock

10-12 Kirk Marple/Chris Kichenberger - Alternative

12-2 Sandy Wilmarth - Hardcore Punk

WRKU'S GEEKFEST 2

FREE! SAT. 13th

STARTING

GRIEVING
EUCALYPTUS

11AM-7PM

GRASS RECORDS

POLLEN

DJ MARS

THE FROZEN FIELDS

BUGLITE

TA SURPRISE BAND

OUTSIDE AT THE FIELD

HOCKEY FIELD NEXT TO

THE SOUTH DINING HALL

LOTS O' ORGANIZATIONS LIKE
PCTR, GREENPACE, GRASS RECORDS, ETC.

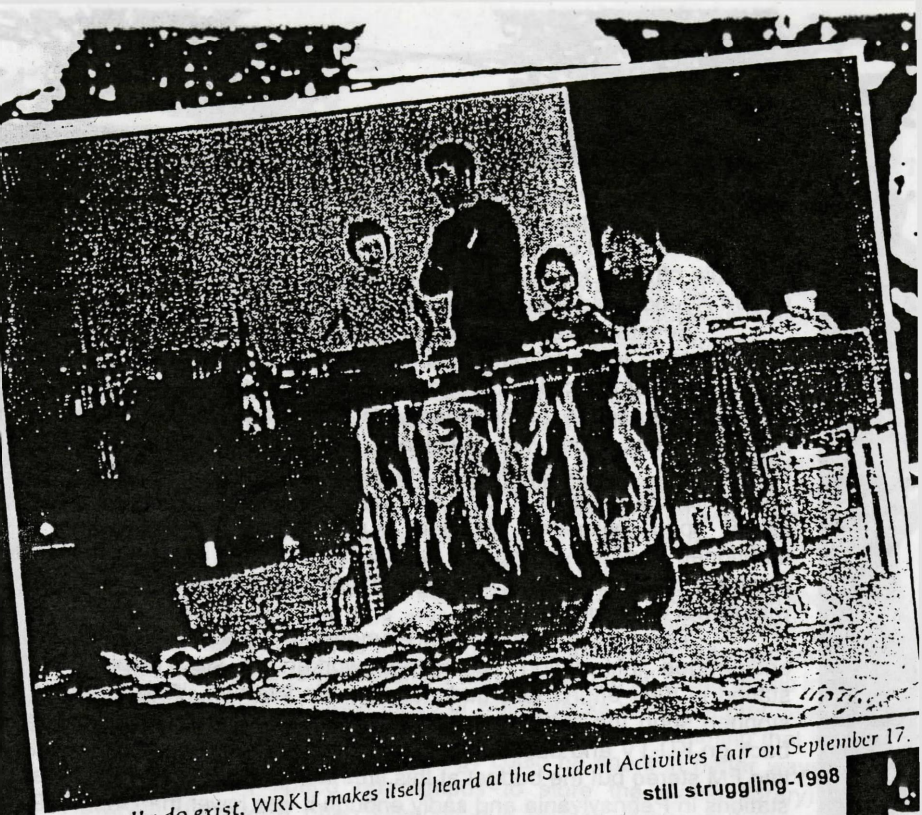
top: schedule from early '90s
bottom: files for various WRKU
sponsored shows/benefits-1995

The following semester in February of 1995 an article appeared defending the station and discussing some of its opposition. This included the administration who some felt were attempting to hinder progress. The Student Government Association was said to be making moves to remove WRKU from the cafeteria (and would eventually succeed). Again the student body was lodging complaints. According to a staff member the station had around 85 members "yet to hear some people talk WRKU is a group of about five bohemian oddballs who broadcast for the sole purpose of bothering the whole student body."

Again there is a gap in my research that picks up nearly two years later in October of 1997. At this time the staff and spirit of the station seemed to be in a state of decline. This is evidenced by several complaints lodged by a DJ against the current staff stemming from his inability to gain access to the station during his scheduled show time. No one was there to open the station and no one had turned in the list to public safety that allowed DJs to sign keys out. He

the staff of WRKU-1996





*They really do exist. WRKU makes itself heard at the Student Activities Fair on September 17.
still struggling-1998*

went on to say that many think the station is a joke and that is because the head staff is a joke. He attributed station decline to poor communication between staff, no posted office hours, and lack of professionalism.

At this time the station had been removed from the South Dining Hall and the KU-TV channel leaving the AM carrier current and FM cable (which was difficult to utilize in the first place) as the only methods of broadcasting. In May of 1998 another editorial, also by a staff member, proclaimed that a school with a telecommunications major should have a more functional, better-equipped radio station. In September of that year an article appeared that again emphasized the lack of listeners due to poor reception. However, it now seemed that barely any students outside of those living in Rothermel Hall could receive the signal. If this was true then the reception was the worst it had ever been in the station's thirty-year history.

With the plans for an addition to the Student Union Building members again brought up the possibility of moving out of the Rothermel Down Under. They also discussed possibly putting the station back on KU-TV and in the South Dining Hall. However, it would never officially make it back into the South Dining Hall and only made it back onto KU-TV for a limited amount of time in the early '00s.

Sometime in 1998 the station went off the air permanently when, during renovations to Rothermel Hall, the main carrier current

wires were accidentally cut and never fixed. However, the staff continued to struggle for FM status. They also explored alternatives to carrier current and continued to promote the station to make certain it didn't die off. In October of 1999 they held another "Band Blast" with Covert Agency, Old Blood Mechanics and Space Station Integration.

Several articles appeared in the Keystone in 2000 as the station began to investigate Real Audio broadcasts. A website was set up and a group called collegemusic.com was contacted in order to provide server space for the broadcasts. The administration was fairly helpful at this time with President McFarland being particularly encouraging. His sabbatical in the beginning of 2000 coupled with unfounded fears that the broadcasts would take up precious university server space allocated for Real Audio sports broadcasts (as I mentioned the server space would be provided by an outside company something the administration didn't quite grasp) resulted in a withdrawal of previous support.

There were even certain elements of the administration that encouraged Information Technology workers to stop helping the station in their efforts to broadcast over the Internet. With this plan stopped short the staff continued to struggle with getting the station back on KU-TV and back in the South Dining Hall. They also looked into FM stereo but the budget at this time was the lowest of all college stations in Pennsylvania and sadly enough it was lower than the 1969 budget for WKSC of \$3,600 (then the highest budgeted group on campus). Even with a 58% increase the following semester the station was still far from being able to afford much of anything.

When the university offered WRKU space in the addition to the SUB they accepted after promises of more space and a location more surrounded by student activity. What they found was less space and less student activity outside its doors.

By spring of 2001 the move was complete with all of the old equipment purchased in the '70s left behind (including the console and turntables) to be scrapped by KU maintenance. With the new lack of room nearly three-fourths of the vinyl and many of the CDs that had accumulated since the station's inception were also left behind.

The new station was bereft of any equipment outside of a few computers. However, money was allocated for a broadcasting antenna and due to the FCC's creation of low power FM a space finally opened up on the FM dial. This was great news except for the lack of broadcasting equipment. It was almost too funny to be true. The station that for thirty years had fought for an FM antenna and space on the dial now had both but was lacking what it always had: the equipment to make a radio show.

During this time the staff went through many upheavals as all college organization staff does. However, this was a pivotal time for the station and the understandable lack of knowledge and experience on the part of the new staff members began to cause problems.

These problems hindered the maintenance of administrative and student government support, which in turn hindered the acquisition of broadcasting equipment.

During this time several committees were set up containing members of the staff and members of the telecommunications department. Each committee had a different purpose (programming, guidelines, writing a constitution, etc.) with the combined goal of getting on the air as soon as possible. Every upcoming semester became the target date and every new semester brought nothing new.

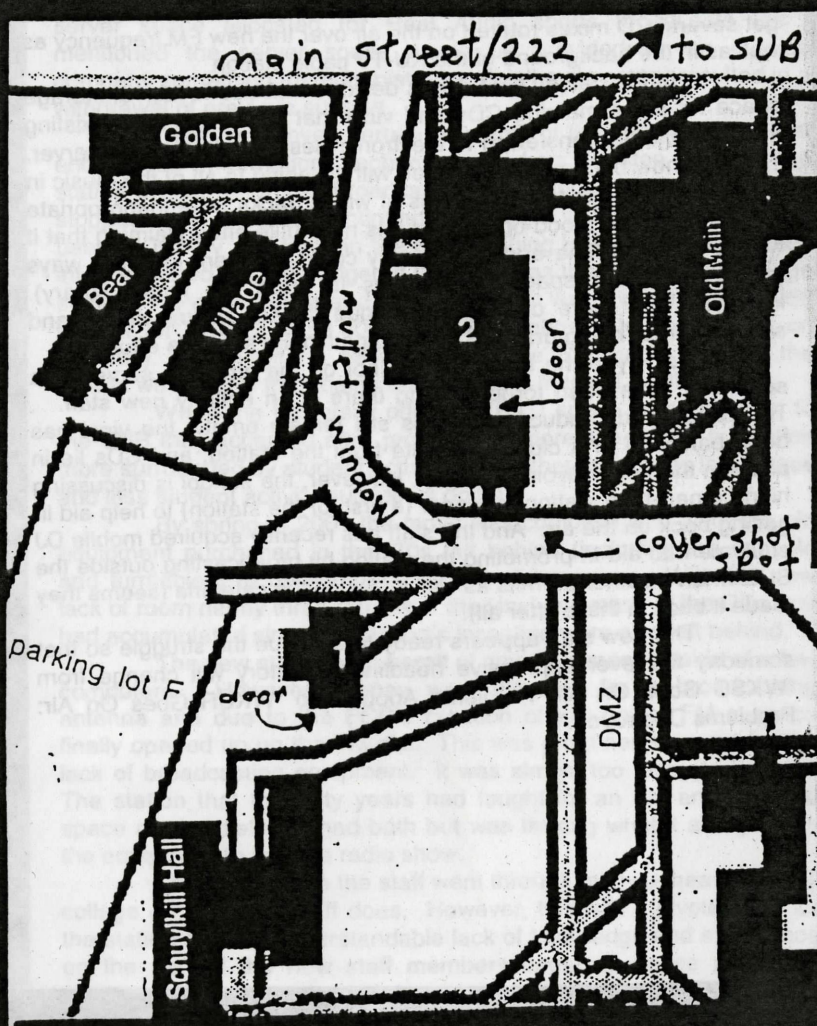
Also during this time the station call letters were unofficially changed to WKUR due to another station utilizing WRKU. Despite the lack of equipment to broadcast live radio shows the staff was able to get several CD mixes rotated on the air over the new FM frequency as well as in the background of the KU-TV cable station,

In the Fall of 2001 it was decided that due to lack of storage space for the remaining CDs and vinyl that all the station's existing music would be transferred to electronic files and stored on a server. The staff now became preoccupied with listening to all of the music in the station in order to make notes of which tracks were inappropriate for airing. A few stood up against this new futile effort claiming that it was a waste of time and that energy could be spent in better ways (such as finding space on campus to store the music library). However, they were often silenced due to lack of knowledge and seniority or for being branded as unhelpful in the station's efforts

As I type the station is still not on the air. The server idea seems to have been forgotten and there is an entirely new staff. The on air and production studios still remain empty, the vinyl has been banished to a closet separate from the station, and CDs lie in piles on the floor devoid of racks. However, the school is discussing hiring a part-time station manager (a first for the station) to help aid in getting back on the air. And the staff has recently acquired mobile DJ equipment to aid in promoting the station by broadcasting outside the SUB when weather permits as well as inside the cafeteria (seems they made it back in there after all).

The new staff appears ready to continue the struggle so that someday the ever oppressive headline of history will change from "WKSC Goes On Air: Problems Abound" to "WKUR Goes On Air: Problems Destroyed."

walking tour



Our tour begins at:

1-The John B. White Multicultural center (once known as the Student Center/Bears Den)

Original offices and studios from 1967 to 1986

Start out by walking from parking lot F behind the Golden Bear Village West onto the grass between the John B. White Multicultural Center and Schuylkill Hall. Turn to face the White house (the left side). Notice the big white double doors most likely with a big pile of leaves, dirt, or garbage at the bottom. Walk up really close until you can see the traces of what used to be stick on letters saying WRKU. These are the hallowed doors that once led to the very first radio station in Kutztown and now lead to nothing as there's an apartment there and you can't use them. Think about the fact that people used to actually walk between the White house and Schuylkill Hall with a sense of purpose and excitement and not just for stupid walking tours. The letters would have been put there sometime in 1984 when the station switched call letters. Two years later they would be peeled off when the station moved to:

2-The Rothermel Down Under

Offices and studios from 1986 to 2000

Stop looking at the letters and walk towards the DMZ. Hang a left onto the giant sidewalk and start walking towards Rothermel Hall. Look at the bottom windows of Rothermel, specifically the second set from the right. If its dark out (which would have made it hard for you to see the letters on the White House so it probably shouldn't be dark out) and the lights are on in the basement you will clearly see the stick on letters proclaiming, "long live the mullet" (and the stupid wolfpac sticker too). This window used to belong to the radio station when it was in the Rothermel Down Under. Don't think too hard about why some dumb ass spelled mullet in stick on letters and NOT WRKU so that when his friend added "long live the..." and the university sealed the letters in between two plates of glass, forever immortalizing them, it said "long live the mullet" not "long live WRKU," which would make more sense. Think about how this freshman grew up and got guilty and ended up writing an entire zine about the station to appease that guilt.

Walk up to this window and peer in. You will see people playing pool on what used to be the floor of the station. Before the station moved there in 1986, it was a poolroom. Then the school put up walls to form rooms for the station and separate it from the rest of the Rothermel recreation room. Fourteen years later they tore them down and put the poolroom back. This is made more ridiculous considering the fact that the very first station had also previously been a poolroom.

Before the walls were torn down the station ran from a little left of the mullet window to the back wall with a separate room for the station manager included in this space.

While looking, mourn the loss of one of the coolest spots to hang out in on campus. The couches were dirty but comfortable, the walls were covered with posters and stickers, the floor was covered in shitty rugs, the hallways were strange and inviting, the record collection was huge and stuck in closets (and you could play DJ and spin them all day if you wanted (not that anyone was listening)), there was old broken junk in one room (production studio), and old nearly broken junk in the other (on-air studio), the kids were fun and creative, and no one was around to bother anybody. It was paradise.

Stop staring at the pool players and walk towards Old Main. After a few steps you will pass the spot where the cover photo was taken. You won't recognize it much because the trashcan is gone. All that remains is a cement block. Check it out and then make a left so that you're walking in between Old Main and Rothermel.

After about fifteen feet there will be a sidewalk on the left that intersects with the one you're on and runs towards Rothermel. Follow this sidewalk straight towards the janitor's-closet-like door. Notice the stick on letters that say WRKU. This is the station door. Knock. No one will answer.

Peek in and look to the right. Notice a door. It led to the tiny little bathroom with its mysterious "E. Tiner" graffiti and other oddities. To the left was the hallway to the on-air studio, production room, and eventually back to the offices that are now the poolroom (although that section is now sealed off from this part of the station).

Look in the window on your left. This used to be the production studio/junk room. Notice that the university now stores a bunch of leftover dorm shit in there. Think about how sad this all is. Try not to slip on your tears as you make the journey to:

3-The Student Union Building **Current office and studios**

Go here. Ask someone at the desk where the radio station is. They won't have a clue. Walk down the stairs towards the bookstore. Make a sharp left at the bottom. Follow this hallway around to the new auditorium/movie theater. Walk past the auditorium and make a left towards what appears to be just bathrooms. Walk all the way to the end of this unassuming hallway and knock on the last door on the left. This is the new, couch-less, smaller, cleaner, less comfortable, empty, but still loving and creative/productive radio station. Say hello. Sign up to aid in the Kutztown college radio struggle. Struggle. A lot.

the zines

In the late '80s WRKU had a staff made up of punk and hardcore kids, indie rockers and outcasts who were in love with the underground and its do it yourself cry. They'd already made meager attempts at spreading the word through the airwaves of Kutztown University. The next logical step was printed media. Thus began the seven-year history of the WRKU zines.

The very first came out in 1988 and was titled "Tales of WRKU." It was an offset printed music zine with clean, vibrant layout, bold text, and varied content. While certainly calling the reader's attention to the station it was about more than plugging radio shows. It was about further nurturing and expressing a love for music. This was done through reviews (The Smiths "Strangeways Here We Come," The Descendents "Livage," Guns N' Roses "Appetite for Destruction," to name a few), an interview with the Circle Jerks (after their show in Allentown), and an article against censorship in music (based around the Dead Kennedys' "Frankenchrist troubles"). And just to keep things college, a small poetry section and a few faked personals.

In her introduction to the zine Sandy Wilmarth, Art Director, gave insight into the spirit of the station and zine:

"with this, we attempt to present to you, the listening audience of WRKU, an opportunity to see us more as we really are: a collection of diverse individuals operating on the premise that alternative consciousness and creative ideas can actually produce something worthwhile, enjoyable and enduring."

The first and only issue of "Tales of WRKU" would spark three issues of "WRKU fanzine" (none of which I ever located) and the much more prolific and long-lived Pop Schmeat (it began around 1990, made it to nineteen issues, and lasted through two different station managers and nearly five years). All that remains of those are water damaged but still readable originals dug out of the corners of the Rothermel Down Under.

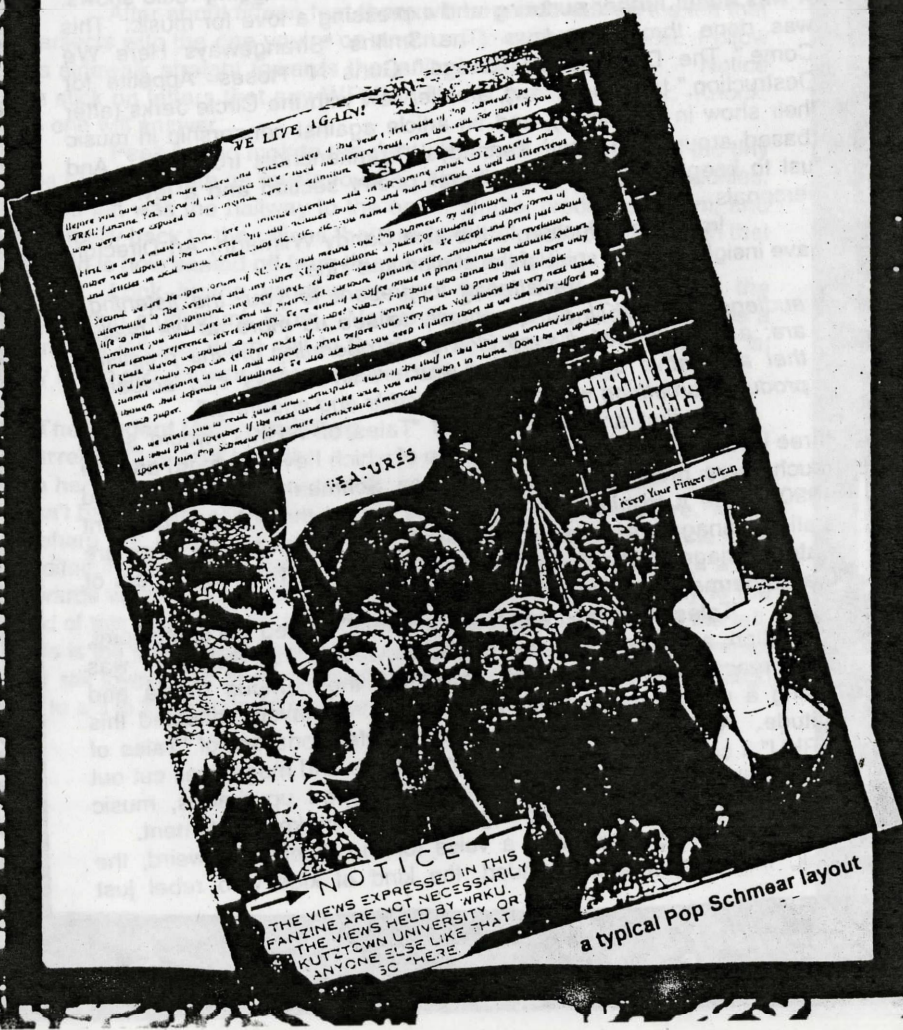
"Tales of WRKU" and "Pop Schmeat" shared the same spirit, inspiration, and to some extent goals. However, "Pop Schmeat" was more reactionary, more about reclaiming the campus media and having a good time by being a nuisance. Its layout reflected this attitude. A sharp contrast to the clean professionalism of "Tales of WRKU" it contained images from newspapers and magazines cut out and mutilated then jabbed together with typed up tirades, music reviews, and poems designed to get a laugh or make a statement.

"Pop Schmeat" was a voice for the lonely, the weird, the punk, the independently minded, the kind of kids who rebel just

because no one else will (and because its important). It was also for those who enjoyed the empowerment of taking control out of the hands of the few and putting it back into their own. Again from an editorial:

"We are the open forum of KU...Pop Schmeat by definition, is the alternative to The Keystone and any other KU publications; a place for students and other forms of life to shout their opinions, sing their songs, tell their jokes and stories. We accept and print just about anything you care to send us..."

And while the needling poetry, comics, rants, and reviews of "Pop Schmeat" never felled any giants, I'm sure they stuck a bug down the back of the administration on more than one occasion.



Top 10 Makeout
Spots on Campus
(with Someone)

- 1 Commuter laundry room
- 2 WRKU's Bathroom
- 3 Under Dr. B.... Desk
- 4 DMZ Fountain
- 5 On top of Bear in Key stone
- 6 Rainbow Room
- 7 GRIM Planetarium
- 8 Beck's Wall
- 9 On top of the Water Tower
- 10 Blue Elevator Room on Deatrick

top: from an issue of Pop
Schmear
bottom: a few of the staff

pop schmear staff:



When you're a struggling radio station constantly dogged by contrary students and uptight administration that's good enough.

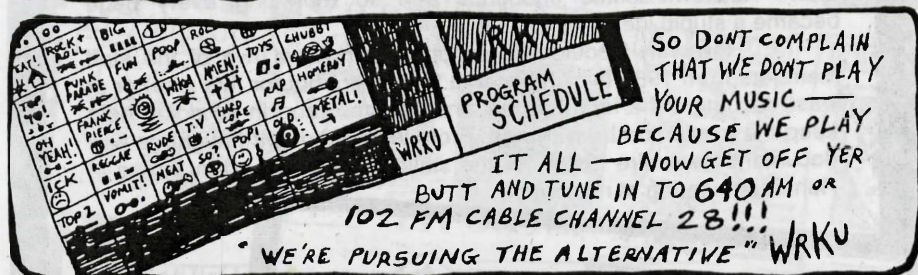
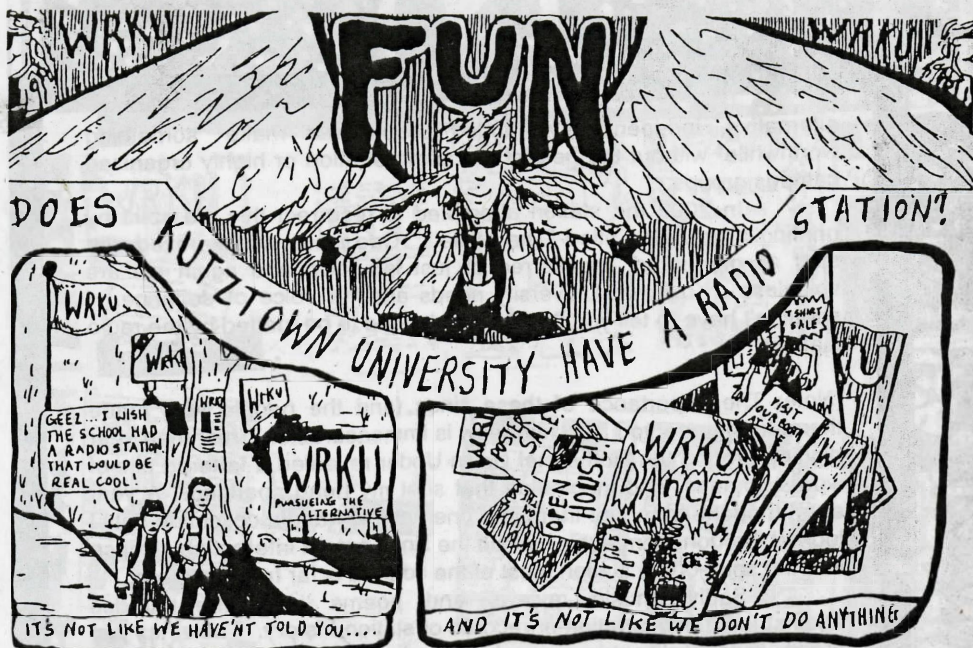
An editorial from beloved early to mid-'90s station manager Seph says it all:

"At first I wanted to bitch about how the administration was jerking me around and acting like your parents by saying we couldn't come out to play with you but that is no longer bothering me. Another reason to write would be [to explain] why we continue this project and don't just submit to the paper (believe me it would be easier). The paper has too many rules and is too conservative also why take a section when you can have the book? If you love order and proper spelling and well rounded literature I've got nothing for ya but if you want to be confused and mentally regressed then welcome."

This type of student run, student empowering, fun and reactionary media is hugely important to staving off the corporate atmosphere created by a non-student centered/run campus. As Sandy Wilmarth said in "Tales of WRKU" it shows people that



every cover ever (taken from the cover of the final Pop Schmeat "editor's choice" issue)-1988 through 1995



**"the more things change..." -
from the back of "Tales of
WRKU" - 1988**