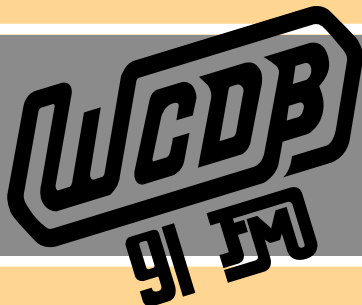


Station Identification

By Carol Olechowski

Since its début in 1978, UAlbany's radio station, WCDB (90.9 FM) – and its AM predecessor, WSUA – have afforded students opportunities for fun and creativity while preparing them for the business world. Here, three alumni reflect on their days in college radio and offer some insights into how the experience allowed them to segue into fascinating careers both within and outside the music industry.





Holly Schomann, B.A.'93 Musical Epiphany

“I had always loved music, even as a young kid,” Holly Schomann says. “My older brother gave me his old portable record player and some of his old 45s for my birthday one year. Mind you, none of these 45s, which included ‘Smoking in the Boy’s Room’ by Brownsville Station and ‘Bad, Bad Leroy Brown’ by Jim Croce, were appropriate for a 6-year-old girl.”

In high school, she worked at a veterinarian’s office and planned to major in biology at college to prepare for veterinary school. Schomann reconsidered when “I realized that college would expose me to a focus or career that I hadn’t yet contemplated. Working at WCDB changed my mind. That was my ‘Aha’ moment.”

An “epiphany” regarding her career path occurred when Schomann recognized “that I could work in radio and always be around music. In that sense, WCDB is the reason why I worked in the music industry,” observes Schomann, who began her career at Viacom after earning a bachelor’s in psychology. She went on to hold executive positions in talent, music, and label relations at MTV, Warner Bros., SiriusXm, and Vevo.

At WCDB, Schomann was an overnight DJ. Two hours a week, “I played a lot of industrial bands, like Front 242, NIN, and Cabaret Voltaire, but also more straightforward indie rock, like the Pixies, Jane’s Addiction, Buffalo Tom, REM, and Siouxsie and the Banshees. I really loved discovering new music and working to help make the station run. I spent all my time there; I would go in between classes and eat lunch there, just to spend time with friends and listen to music. I was a part of WCDB all four of my years at UAlbany.”

Schomann recalls “trying to stay awake between my shift’s end and classes. There was a two- or three-hour gap, which wasn’t really enough time to sleep, but long enough to go back to the dorm, shower, and change. After I got ready, I would leave my door open so, in case I fell asleep, one of my hallmates would see me and wake me up to get to class.”

Later, as program director, Schomann was responsible for “creating the on-air schedule, covering any shifts DJs couldn’t make, clearing promos, and making sure that the DJs got the keys to go in and out of the Campus Center.” This experience laid the basis for most of my

John Robinson



Two souvenir photos show Schomann posing with her prized WCDB mug and with singing-songwriting legend Graham Nash.



Maro Hagapian

career, which focused on music programming. It prepared me for working in the real world and helped me get a job at the local commercial station, WPYX (PYX 106), my senior year,” notes Schomann, now senior vice president and delivery manager for Citi’s Chief Data Office in New York City.

The program-director’s position also built Schomann’s résumé – and prepared her well for a career spent “working with people to deliver an end goal.” She explains: “Whether it was organizing a schedule of DJs at WCDB; working with record labels and bands to create unique brand-enhancing content on MTV, SiriusXm, or Vevo; or organizing a development team to produce an application at Citi, the ability to problem solve and produce a deliverable has been consistent.”

“Throughout my 15 or so years in the music industry,” she adds, “I had the chance to work with many of my early idols, including U2; REM; Perry Farrell from Jane’s Addiction; Beastie Boys; Blur; Chris Cornell from Soundgarden; and Nick Cave, just to name a few.”

Schomann has many fond memories of WCDB. They include the “very cool day” that “the Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy (Michael Franti) performed in our main studio and improvised, using a garbage can or a bucket as a drum.”

She’s also kept a tangible souvenir of her college-radio years: “I still have my WCDB mug!”



Nick Cave and Schomann are shown at SiriusXM in September 2009.

Maro Hagopian

Tisha Lewis Ellison, Ph.D.'09

Divine Inspiration

Newly enrolled at UAlbany, Tisha Lewis Ellison discovered WCDB while exploring the campus with a friend and learned the station was seeking new deejays for the following school year. “I had always wanted my own radio show. So I knew that my steps were led to WCDB for a divine reason,” says the University of Georgia (UGA) assistant professor.

Ellison, then a Ph.D. student in UAlbany’s reading program, already had broadcasting experience at WKYS-FM and NPR in her native Washington, D.C., and with WTVR-TV in Richmond. Her other media work included a stint at the *Richmond Free Press* and a summer internship at Black Entertainment Television (BET).

Soon, Ellison was lending her talents to WCDB. “‘The Healing Room’ aired every Thursday from 12 to 2 p.m. for three-and-a-half years. I played contemporary gospel music, and I interviewed members of the community about events or information of interest to people in the Albany area,” she remembers.

For Ellison, “The Healing Room” was also “ministry”: “People would call in asking me to pray for them, or needing encouragement. I enjoyed being a representative for the Lord when I attended music conferences, and interviewing and writing about the gospel personalities I admired.”

Ellison no longer works in broadcasting, instead focusing on her research in digital literacies/media with UGA’s Department of Language and Literacy Education. “I learn how families and adolescents of color use various forms of digital tools to make sense of their literate lives,” explains Ellison. “Teaching, writing, and presenting on these topics about underrepresented populations is something I am most proud of.”



Several UAlbany professors mentored Ellison during her academic journey. “Drs. [Peter] Johnson and [Cheryl] Dozier were on my dissertation committee. I was a teaching assistant for Dr. [KaiLonnie] Dunsmore when she taught *Literacy and Society*, which had been one of my favorite classes. I see or speak with all three professors regularly; we attend the same conferences, so it is always great to reconnect with them. When I won the 2016 Literacy Research Association Early Career Achievement Award, they were there to offer congratulations. Dr. [Marcia] Sutherland of Africana Studies was a jewel, advocating for me during my time at the University. I am indebted to her and to everyone there who supported my endeavors.”

Ellison has also held adjunct or tenure-track positions at Trinity College, Howard University, American University, and Georgia State University.



Diarmuid Quinn, B.A.'83

The Business Side of Music

When Diarmuid [pronounced DEAR-mid] Quinn arrived at the University at Albany, “I had my sights set on a career in the U.S. Diplomatic Corps, with the hope that I’d eventually become an ambassador. When I found WCDB, all that changed,” remembers the founder and CEO of TourDForce Productions, which manages singers Josh Groban and Richard Marx.

Quinn’s father taught at RPI, “but I wasn’t math or engineering material!” laughs the Troy native, who opted for a history major with a minor in political science at Albany. In his free time, Quinn played in cover bands at gigs on and off campus. “We were never great,” he acknowledges, “which is probably why I ended up on the business side of the music business. I loved music and wanted to be in it, and that was the best door I could find to go through.”

WCDB “was absolutely the key” to that door, adds Quinn. “Dave Reisman [B.A.’80], the general manager, convinced me to sign up for on-air training. He was a superb teacher and a great advocate for the station. I was hooked.”

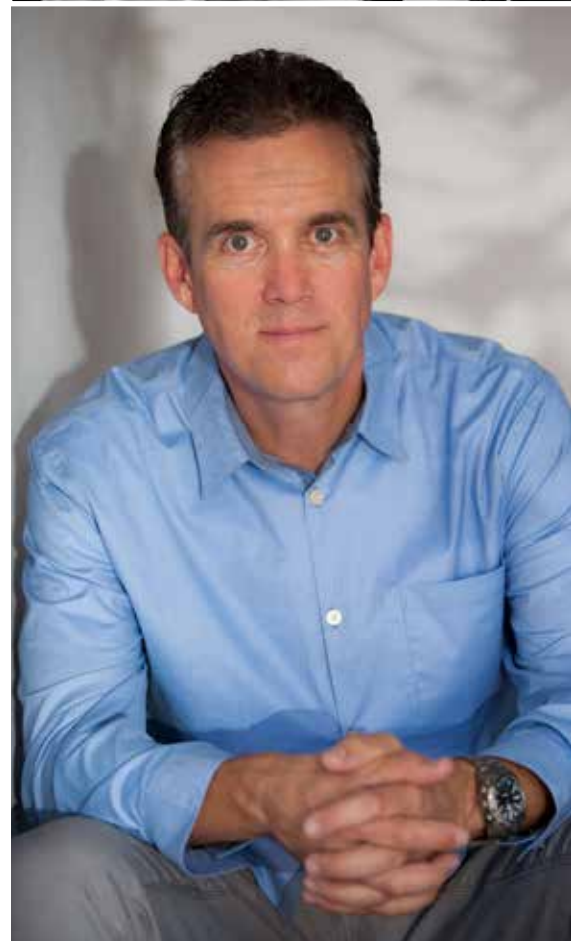
Quinn began at WCDB freshman year and continued there until he graduated. “I was a DJ first, with a morning shift; then I became the program director. That was a pivotal role, as I had to decide who was on air and what shift they had. We essentially played what you would call today ‘alternative,’ but back then, the only place to hear cutting-edge music was college radio. The record companies loved us, because we were the only airplay outlets for artists like Elvis Costello, Psychedelic Furs, Black Flag, the Sex Pistols. And yes, we took requests. That was the most entertaining part of a late-night shift!” Quinn recalls.

“WCDB was a great community; we would hang out at the station for hours, whether on air or not. Many of my greatest friendships resulted from my time there. WCDB was an incredible gift to us. It gave us all the freedom to be creative while learning about running a business. Most important, it enabled us to find futures doing something we loved.”

After earning his degree, Quinn accepted an entry-level job in the music business “and just kept going from there. I eventually ended up running Reprise Records and being the chief operating officer of Warner Bros., which was the place we all wanted to work. After that, getting into management was an obvious offshoot, and has been very satisfying.”

A manager, Quinn explains, “deals with every aspect of what the artists are involved in professionally: recording, touring, Broadway, film, TV, books – you name it. Generally, the most time is spent on recording, promotion, and touring. In the digital age, rights management and ownership are increasingly important, and though I have never studied law, I have been dealing with contracts for 20-plus years, so there are days when I feel like an intellectual-property lawyer.”

The shift to the digital age has necessitated an almost complete reinvention of the business, a process “finally turning the corner with the adoption of streaming.” Quinn notes: “A manager’s biggest challenge is making sure clients have great creative outlets that keep them driven and that they are appropriately compensated, which is easier said than done. The most rewarding part has always been watching the seed of an idea that few expect to work grow into a big success.”



In the photo at the top, Quinn attends a tour rehearsal with Josh Groban.



Glen Trotiner, B.A.'78, M.S.'79

Making Movie Magic

Glen Trotiner first experienced the power of motion pictures as a child. "Family outings to movies always felt like very big adventures as we journeyed from The Bronx down to Radio City Music Hall. There, on the big screen, we experienced such future classics as 'The Music Man,' 'The Sound of Music,' and 'Mary Poppins,'" he recalls.

Even as a youngster, Trotiner realized that great films like those not only personally engaged individual viewers, but also connected members of the audience to each other. Now a producer, director, and assistant director on feature films, including "The Promise," "What Happens in Vegas," "Last Holiday," "Big Daddy," and "Independence Day," Trotiner tries to recreate that same experience for other filmgoers.

Connections are likewise forged at the creative stage, he notes. "Collaboration is so integral to the success of each project. As part of the filmmaking team, you create your own personal contribution, but your particular piece also has to fit seamlessly with everyone else's in order to create a satisfying, finished piece of art. Everyone, from the writer, director, cinematographer, assistant director, editor – all the way to the fifth grip, the production assistant dealing with the extras in the holding area, the assistant editor logging the previous day's footage – contributes their own particular brand of sorcery.

"In the end, the entire group endeavor brings a unique story to life, transforming what was once just an idea into the best possible version of itself," Trotiner observes.

To create movie magic, a filmmaker's knowledge must be versatile, and at UAlbany, Trotiner sought academic choices that would prepare him for "a variety of fields and career options." Teaching "was one of those options – and

it may still be. Even though I didn't pursue a traditional career in teaching, it's never been far from my heart. I could easily see working as a teacher/professor, either part time or full time, later in life. So many great teachers are amazing storytellers."

One such storyteller, Catharine Newbold, taught United States history and "had a profound influence on me," remembers Trotiner. She spun tales of bygone days in a unique, interesting, magical way. Professor Newbold also taught me about the power of myth, the understanding of which, I feel, is essential to being a great storyteller. Myths [help to] bind us together culturally. They also lie at the root of some of the best stories and some of the true classic films, like 'Frankenstein,' 'Star Wars,' and 'Lord of the Rings.'"

At UAlbany, "radio was "a parallel interest of mine," Trotiner says, and he found "a tremendously creative outlet" at the campus radio station, WSUA, when he took over "The Saturday Night of Gold" sophomore year. "I played the same Top-40 songs that I listened to growing up, trying to recreate that same entertaining experience for my own audience. My show was built around taking on-air requests and dedications, so I got to play everything from The Beatles to Bo Donaldson and the Heywoods, and I often personalized requests for callers."

In the 1970s, WSUA "was on AM 64, and it was 'carrier current,' meaning you had to plug the radio into an electrical outlet in order to hear the station. The signal also had a buzz, which was a target of ridicule on campus."

Working the 11 p.m.-to-4 a.m. shift, Trotiner was on the air "until long after the towers in the quads went dark. Often, the lines for requests and dedications were



painfully quiet, and I'd wonder if anyone was listening. None of that ever got me down. As an artist, you have to please yourself first and foremost and not worry about the audience,

because no one might be listening – or, in my case, these days – the movie might never get released."

Trotiner earned a bachelor's degree in English and a master's in reading, then attended Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law "to further broaden my skill set and give me time to figure out how to synthesize my interests and abilities into a totality that made sense." Shortly after receiving his J.D. in 1984, he "randomly" learned about a two-year apprenticeship with The Directors Guild of America (DGA) Training Program, which "prepares participants for the job of second assistant director." That "bottom-of-the-rung" position is below those of "first assistant director, production manager, producer, and director," explains Trotiner.

"Like many things in my life, being in the right place at the right time, and capitalizing on the situation, yielded huge results," he adds. Trotiner submitted an application and letters of recommendation, then attended an orientation. With about 300 other applicants, he took a test posing "a mixture of math, verbal, spatial-relations, and personality questions" that winnowed out about three-quarters of the group. Trotiner made the cut.

The next step of the application process





included role-playing exercises, “including one that asked, ‘What if there are eight of you on a cruise ship that’s sinking, and only five can fit in the lifeboat? Who gets to go?’ There really was no good answer, and, in reality, I probably would have been eaten by sharks.” Instead, Trotiner and about a dozen others were chosen “to move on to the final, critical phase”: individual half-hour interviews with the training program’s board of trustees. “About a week later, I got a letter that said I was one of the half-dozen people selected for a two-year, on-the-job, paid apprenticeship in the motion-picture business,” he notes.

Trotiner was granted DGA membership two years later. And more than three decades after completing his apprenticeship, he maintains his connection with the training program. “In the mid-1990s, I was appointed to the board of trustees,” says Trotiner, whose tenure now exceeds that of any other trustee who has ever served. “Each year, I sit at that conference table as the final candidates come in one by one for their interviews. About six of them have their lives instantly changed, just as I once did.”

The veteran filmmaker enjoys “working with the very people who inspired me to begin with, and hearing their stories and experiencing their craftsmanship up close.” Three “larger-than-life household names” have “brought out my inner fan-boy,” he admits. On the final day of filming “Power,” the first movie on which he worked as

a DGA trainee, Trotiner told Gene Hackman of his longtime admiration for the actor’s work in “The Poseidon Adventure,” a film that was a major factor” in Trotiner’s career aspirations. Trotiner spent one Thanksgiving with Harrison Ford; his then-wife, Melissa Mathison; and their family during the making of “Regarding Henry.” And “fellow nerd and chronic storyteller” Richard Dreyfuss, with whom Trotiner worked on the television series “The Education of Max Bickford,” gave Trotiner an autographed first edition of his alternate-history novel *The Two Georges* after they discussed the actor-author’s book during a break on the set. “What a great Christmas present that was,” Trotiner remembers.



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will celebrate the
40th
anniversary
of
WCDB
(“the Capital District’s Best”),
and
WSUA’s 55th,
with a
REUNION
MARCH 1-4,
2018.

For information,
please link to
www.wcdb.org/anniversaries/.

Trotiner, at left, speaks with Sigourney Weaver and Wallace Shawn on the set of “Vamps”; offers some direction to Natalie Portman, left, and Norah Jones, center, during the filming of “My Blueberry Nights”; and takes a break while shooting “Deliver Us From Evil” on location in Abu Dhabi.