

Student Organization Earns National Recognition

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Music Director, Sean Riley, will help bring UNH's radio station (WUNH), to mtvU's College Radio Countdown program where college radio stations across the country have the opportunity to play the songs that best represents their vibe. [See WUNH featured on mtvU here.](#)

For one week that began on Tuesday, March 19, WUNH will be featured on mtvU's "College Radio Countdown." mtvU is an online property of MTV that's geared to college audiences. As one of only a handful of university radio stations chosen to participate in CRC, WUNH chose 10 music videos that have been popular on WUNH and represent the station.

These will be posted on the CRC website along with a short introductory video the station did with help from classmates involved in SCAN-TV. "We're hoping this will bring us some great national exposure," says station General Manager Ian Chase '13.

Exposure shouldn't be a problem. Broadcast to more than 750 college campuses and via top cable distributors to 700 college communities nationwide, mtvU reaches 9 million U.S. college students, making it the largest, most comprehensive television network just for college students. "Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, mtvU can be seen in the dining areas, fitness centers, student lounges and dorm rooms of campuses throughout the U.S.," is how the company's spokesperson puts it.

The truth is WUNH has already achieved a measure of national notoriety for its innovative programming. In October, Sean Riley traveled to New York City for the College Music Journal awards. CMJ is the leading publication for non-commercial radio in the U.S. WUNH was nominated for three awards, including best use of digital media for its streaming broadcasts and use of social media, the most improved radio station, and the coveted "We'll never sell out!" award that singled out Riley.

"The 'We'll never sell out' award recognizes people who stay true to college radio's mission of playing new, lesser known artists," says Riley. "It also looks out for the little guy in a business with lots of big, pushy companies."

WUNH's presence in New York put them on mtvU's radar.

A native of Newmarket, N.H., Riley grew up playing the piano and guitar and became involved in his high school's jazz band. After spending a year at Great Bay Community College, he transferred to UNH to study psychology and to form a new relationship with music. "I moved from performance to the business side of things," says Riley. "I find it is still fulfilling."

In addition to spinning CDs two afternoons a week as a DJ, Riley serves as the station's music director. In this role, he works with industry promoters who send him dozens of new albums each week. From these, he usually selects 25 to play either on his own shows or as recommendations to other DJs at WUNH. In fact, developing the repertoire and musical knowledge of DJs is another key part of Riley's job description.

"Our policy is that 60 percent of the music we play must be new, while 40 percent can be whatever you want from our collection," Riley says.

A lifelong fan of Elvis Costello and David Bowie, Riley mentions Grizzly Bear out of New York City and Foxygen out of Los Angeles as up and coming bands that are making a name for themselves. “It’s rewarding to help bands like these get heard more widely,” he says.

While Riley and his colleagues at WUNH have moved the radio station firmly into the digital age with streaming music and social media, Riley says that “live radio” remains central to the station’s mission. Yes, Riley envisions the day (coming soon) when WUNH DJs will no longer spin vinyl records and CDs stored in four rooms in the Memorial Union Building. But he vows never to follow commercial radio’s trend of employing “robots” to run preprogrammed shows. “Sure, the music will be stored on a server rather than in piles,” says Riley, “but our DJs will continue to do what they are supposed to do – and that’s keep listeners entertained, catch them off guard, and educate them about what’s out there,” says Riley.

Besides, live radio turns the DJ from a technician into a performer, with its attendant risks and rewards. “Sometimes, if I feel like I’m in the zone, I start improvising live to keep the mood or energy going,” says Riley. “I love having that control of my work and I know my listeners like it, too.”

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