

7 minutes to read

(minus applause, whistles, cat-calls, cheers, etc).

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[When all the wires^s are connect^{ed}ing, after the last nail is driven, and when all the politicking for money, positions and air-time is finished, we will start the programming. And what will the programming consist of? Well, I imagine that's what a lot of you have been thinking about.

[I think somewhere along the way, everyone one of u^s has heard Dick Biondi or Hy Clark or Dan Sorkin or Ken Nordine (or, going back further, Orson Welles or Norman Corwin), and said, "Damn, that gives me an idea for something I'd like to do on the radio."

[Well, future programmers, this will be your fantasy-dream come true. We will begin the station with 24-hours of pure-blank air time every day, 168 hours every week, minus the time it takes to put a new wick in the transmitter, or whatever it is those engineering folks do...maybe they check the batteries.

[Music, of course, is the bread-and-butter of any station. Consider the stations already in town -- WDWS plays adult contemporary and standards, WLRW plays a Drake-formatted mixture of solid gold oldies and pop-40, WPGU plays hard rock with occasional excursions into other fairly familiar forms, WCCR plays coun^{try}, WKIO, alias K104, alias WTWC, plays comfortable rock, and WPCD plays Top-40 and a melange of other styles, while the University's stations, WILL-AM and FM, play "safe" classical music, speeches, talks and debates from Washington, and reviews of local plays and concerts.

[What does this leave for Prairie Air? Plenty!! There's a whole catalogue of music recorded between 1910 and 1960 that rarely, if ever, gets on the air anyplace. There are record labels, such as Rounder, Arh^obie, Blue Goose, Peacock, Topic, Folkways, New World, Biograph, Odeon, etc., etc., etc., which are never heard anywhere.

(Kicking Mule, Yazoo, Library of Congress,

[Sure, you've heard Steve Martin on the radio, but how about Albert Brooks, Murray Roman, Lord Buckley and Stan Freberg, not to mention Lenny Bruce, Bill Cosby and the Smothers Brothers. Maybe you've heard Joni Mitchell or Bette Midler do the song "Twisted," but have you heard the 1949 original by Wardell Grey or the 1951 vocal by Annie Ross. And when was the last time you heard Blind Willie McTell?

[⁽⁴⁾ Thanks to initial contributions from various sources, including 1200 record albums from Sparky's Used Record Store, another 200 from Dan Dropko, who has now left town, and many more that I will contribute after purchasing the WTWC record library three years ago, Prairie Air will sign on with a record library of more than 4000 albums. If you're trying to imagine how many albums that is, if they were stacked on top of each other (heaven forbid), they'd form a pile more than six stories tall. And then there's the tapes, including live concerts by Mose Allison, Asleep at the Wheel, Oregon, Steve Goodman -- ~~and~~ I could go on and on.

[But there's more than recorded music at our fantasy ^{/real} radio-station. There's live music whenever the chance presents itself. There will be a few hours every week for "open-mike" entertainment, when every folk-singer, tap-dancer and barbershop quartet in town which is looking for an audience can use our airwaves. There will be live broadcasts from local clubs, churches and other places where music happens. There will be visits to the studios by professional ~~musicians~~ musicians just traveling through town as they discover that a station like ours exists -- and they'll do it, too.

[But we can't have music forever on our station. News, of course, is vitally important to a community radio station. We'll probably have some of the same local news that other stations carry -- you know, the town council meetings, police blotter and reports on the U. of I. Board of Trustees, but we hope to go deeper than that. It may be something as simple as broadcasting a school board or East Central Illinois Health Services Agency meeting, or calling ^ssomeone in Washington to find out why he said something or did something or didn't do something.

[Maybe we'll broadcast commentary by local right-wingers or left-wingers or, as Pat Paulsen used to say, people from the middle-of-the-bird. ~~If~~ ^I not right away, then eventually we'll own a portable transmitter to free us from broadcasting strictly from the studio. Then maybe our morning show can broadcast traffic reports of a different type -- say, from the Green line bus at 7:45 a.m., or from someone driving along I-74 or on Neil Street in downtown Champaign. That portable transmitter will also let us broadcast from classrooms, theatres, shopping centers or taxi cabs, from baseball diamonds, bars, brothels and hospitals.

[Studio ^{non-musical} programming won't be dull, though, at least we hope not. Maybe we'll read short segments from the works of Upton Sinclair, Ayn Rand or Jean Paul Sartre. Maybe some of the writings of the late Pope John Paul I, or the poetry of the very much alive John Lennon, or Ogden Nash, or T.S. Eliot, or Samuel Eliot Morrison, or Margaret Mead. And there will be programming for children -- stories, games, music, plays, poetry, what have you.