

Campus radio is lab for students

KCPR is more than music

Stories by Andrea Bernard

Changes from the past, innovations of the present and anticipations for the future make the Cal Poly student-run radio station what it is today.

KCPR, the broadcast journalism laboratory established in 1968 at 10 watts of power, is currently manned by up to 150 staff members each quarter, showering San Luis Obispo 24 hours a day with 2,000 watts of jazz, punk, soul, news and public affairs.

The station prides itself on being the "Sound Alternative," unlike any other station in the area in its distinctive programming format. Its adviser points to the 30 to 40 applicants for positions at KCPR who are turned away each quarter as a testament to the experience and fun

past, placing music forms in special program slots. "Last year a lot of punk was mixed in with New Wave. Lovers of punk didn't get enough of it, and listeners to the regular programming got too much of it. Now punk has its own two hours on Saturday night."

Miguel Fernandez is in charge of special programming at KCPR. His domain covers four hours every evening, offering a variety of musical styles to complement the regular programming of contemporary sounds.

Fernandez, along with program director Dawn Rangel, have developed a special programs format that appeals to a wide variety of listeners, from movie soundtracks to soul, yet stays within the dictates of the KCPR market. Said Fernandez: "We're not as radical as other college

she said.

A more drastic change developed during Rangel's third year. "The music was directed to a very narrow audience. It was harder, cutting edge type."

Rangel said the Sound Alternative should be just that, but only if the alternative is acceptable to the majority with the right amount of obscure music to still challenge the audience.

Rangel wants to work closely with the announcers to assure a professional sound. In an attempt to do so, Rangel developed a format guide, outlining her goals and expectations as program director. She hopes to prevent any "abuse" in music selection that doesn't keep the KCPR audience in mind.

News director Beverly Gagliano is concerned with communication within KCPR,



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Left, DJ trainee Rachel Wooster gets on-air experience in the KCPR news booth. Above, veteran announcer and Studio Engineer Ric Turner manages records and tape cartridges in the main studio of the campus station.



TOM ANDERSON/Mustang Daily

the station provides. Those who land a position at KCPR come from all majors, not just journalism — another aspect that pleases the KCPR executive staff and adviser.

These people speak of KCPR with pride and enthusiasm. They also speak of change.

"This executive staff has done things that haven't been done in the past," said General Manager John Thawley. New programs this quarter include "A Space in Time"; the "Comedy Club," featuring excerpts from humor recordings; and "The SLO Boy and Ramona's Prime Time Family Hard Core Show," showcasing punk music.

Thawley calls the format of the station more refined than in the

stations because of our market. That's Cal Poly and San Luis Obispo. Ours is the only campus in the entire Cal State system that voted for Reagan in the pre-election polls here. It's conservative."

Rangel has been a part of KCPR for four years, first as a disc jockey, then as DJ trainer and now as program director. She has seen an important change take place in the music format over those four years.

"In my first year, the format was completely different. It was more Top 40 — and more stale," said Rangel. The next year, Rangel and the rest of the KCPR staff saw the development of the "Sound Alternative" format.

"We went more toward new styles. It was a fresh change,"

too. "There used to be literally and figuratively a wall between the music department and news. We have more communication now, but I still see a lot of separation between news and DJs. I want to get rid of that block."

Gagliano said for some time many at KCPR believed the purpose of the station was solely to produce music. "The feeling was, 'Well, we have to fit the news in.' But if it wasn't for news, there would be no station. We are partly funded through the journalism department. That is news oriented. For a while our purpose got confused. But that's getting less and less," she said.

Gagliano hopes to someday see a wire machine in her department. "We now pick up wire

from KCXB two times a day. That's bothersome. But worse, the news is a day old. Broadcast news must be the most immediate type of media."

She might have difficulty in accomplishing this goal — both KCPR's adviser and the head of the journalism department are against the introduction of a wire machine to the station.

"We're not training them to read copy over the air, we're training them to write and read local news. I'd prefer not using a wire at all," said adviser Ed Zuchelli.

Randall Murray, department head, said a wire machine looks professional, but it makes the reporting task too easy. He also wants an emphasis on local news at KCPR, particularly angles on national or state stories. "I'd like to fall over as many KCPR reporters as I do Mustang Daily reporters. I want to see them out in the offices, getting information. That's enterprise, and that provides the learning experience in journalism," said Murray.

Apparently, KCPR staffers are learning something because Cal Poly broadcast journalists are working in San Diego, Los Angeles, Phoenix and Denver.

"The people that leave here and go into professional radio are very well prepared. More than any other station, you have a good sense of training to go into the outside world," said Fer-

nandez, citing the direct contact KCPR staffers have in many aspects of station operation.

"Students are kept at arm's length at other college stations, that our run by professionals," said Murray. "We may not be as sophisticated as those stations, but at least at KCPR we don't have all those layers, with no sense of student proprietorship. They feel the station is theirs. As a result, they feel more motivated to do a better job. We have a rougher, but better system."

What will that system be like in the future? KCPR's staff and advisers are brimming with ideas. But the most pressing issue, according to Murray, is to increase the ranks of the broadcast journalism faculty, if only by one person.

"Mr. Zuchelli is it," said Murray. "He must divide his time between advising KCPR and teaching classes. We're now in the process of recruiting a second broadcast journalism instructor. More than anything else, we need an extra hand to energize KCPR."

"We are not polished," Murray said. "Students at KCPR have a reporting responsibility, not just an announcing job. Sometimes they wing it. But KCPR has a great future. It's a great resource. It's like a piece of ore that hasn't become uranium. We need more staff to do that."

Student broadcasts: which listeners to please?

KCPR is run by students, yet the station is licensed by the university. To which constituency should its programming be responsible?

"The question is who holds the license," said Stan Bernstein, director of Public Affairs at Cal Poly. "If ASI held the license, then the station should be representing students rather than the university as a whole. But the university provides the license. I wonder whether there is some kind of implied responsibility for KCPR to provide more breadth and depth than it does."

Bernstein sees KCPR as a showcase for the university, a unique instrument to provide more educational programming that would reflect an institution of higher learning. "Here's a golden opportunity to provide a whole host of programs," he

said. "Consider lectures," Bernstein said. "One thing students, faculty and staff can agree on is the difficulty of parking on campus during the day. But our lectures take place during the day. The facilities we have on campus to provide speakers are lacking to reach a lot of people. KCPR could reach them."

If the station is meant to cater to students, Bernstein continued, maybe its music should be transmitted to the dorms, rather than the community at large. "But KCPR transmits over the public airwaves. Anyone in San Luis can hear the station. Is this present image the one Cal Poly wants to present?"

"KCPR has the opportunity to provide what isn't available elsewhere. Rock 'n' roll is found elsewhere in this city," said

Dean of Students Russ Brown, adding that the station has a great resource in Cal Poly faculty, staff and visiting speakers to provide educational programming.

"KCPR is supposed to be a teaching tool for students who work there. That ought to be its number one priority. But it is a voice of an educational body as well. There should be educational programming. Besides, students needs include educational programming," said Brown.

"Because it is a public enterprise, the station does have some responsibility to the community. Some members of that community would like to tap into it more," Brown said.

Randall Murray, journalism department head, believes that if KCPR moves its orientation to the community, the resultant change in programming would have an ef-

fect on student input at the station.

General Manager John Thawley agrees. "We are an all-volunteer radio station. We need to have programming that would appeal to students to get them to work here. We've always been a radio station for the students. Those involved don't want us playing polka music," he said.

"If we had lots of lectures and classical music, no kids would work on KCPR," said Ed Zuchelli, faculty adviser for the station. "We provide information and entertainment to college students, an audience of 18- to 25-year-olds. That's our prime purpose. We can't be all things to all people. We do a good job for Cal Poly and we're the only one that can give service to this special area," said Zuchelli.