

FEATURES

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Recognizing DJ Maddog's 25th year at WQFS

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STAFF WRITER

It is 5:57 a.m. and Sherill Ward, better known to many as DJ Maddog, is queuing his first song of the day.

"Where is Alabama Shakes?" asks Maddog, flipping through the station's computer. Even though Maddog has done his show "Friday Night Rock Party" for 25 years, he likes to keep it fresh by showcasing new indie and alternative bands.

Maddog has always been passionate about music, even though he cannot play any instruments himself.

"It was just always much easier to put someone else's music on the turntable," said Maddog.

Maddog got into radio in 1988.

"I am still a big-time music head," said Maddog. "They put out a call for summer DJs, and they never got rid of me."

In addition to DJing on both WQFS and WNCW, Maddog interviews bands at concerts and festivals.

"Back in '92, through a strange series of meetings, I was able to get backstage passes at the Redding festival in England," said Maddog. "I have been over there as press 18 times now. For someone that's just kind of hung around the edges of music and rock, I guess (I am proud of) this legacy of putting on what I consider good rock and roll music and I have gotten some decent interviews."

Maddog says his greatest accomplishment as a disc jockey has been absorbing the station's history and being a reference for the current DJs.

"You know, I do not tell them how to do it, but I can say, 'your predecessors did this and it worked,'" said Maddog.

Maddog has left an impression on student DJs during his years at WQFS.

"He is a really great guy and brings a lot to the station," said sophomore Tyler Midkiff, a student DJ. "He has a good radio personality. When I trained with him, he talked about matching your voice and style to the music you play. You have to get your audience as hyped about the music as you are, and he does that well."

Maddog has been around for long enough to observe the station grow and evolve.

"Of course the technology, when I first came in here, it was like the Beck song," said Maddog. "We had two turntables and a microphone. I may have been the first person to play a CD here."

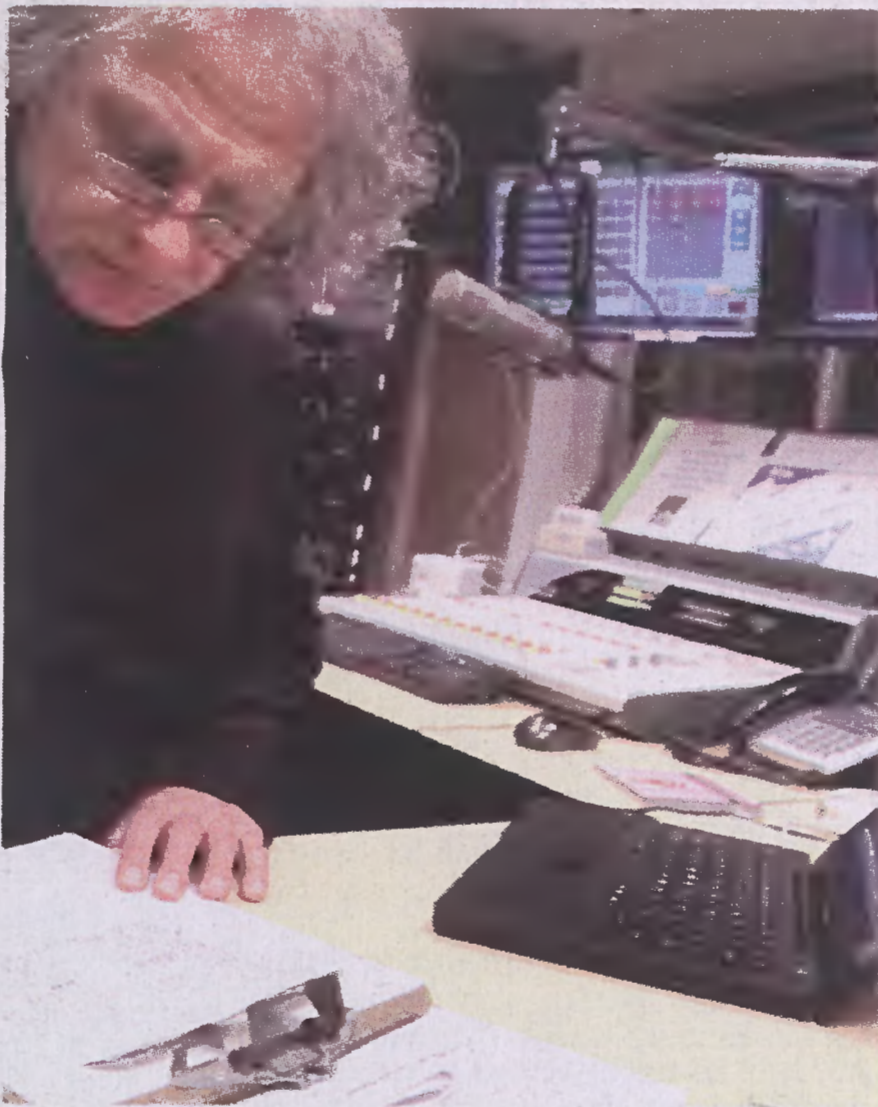
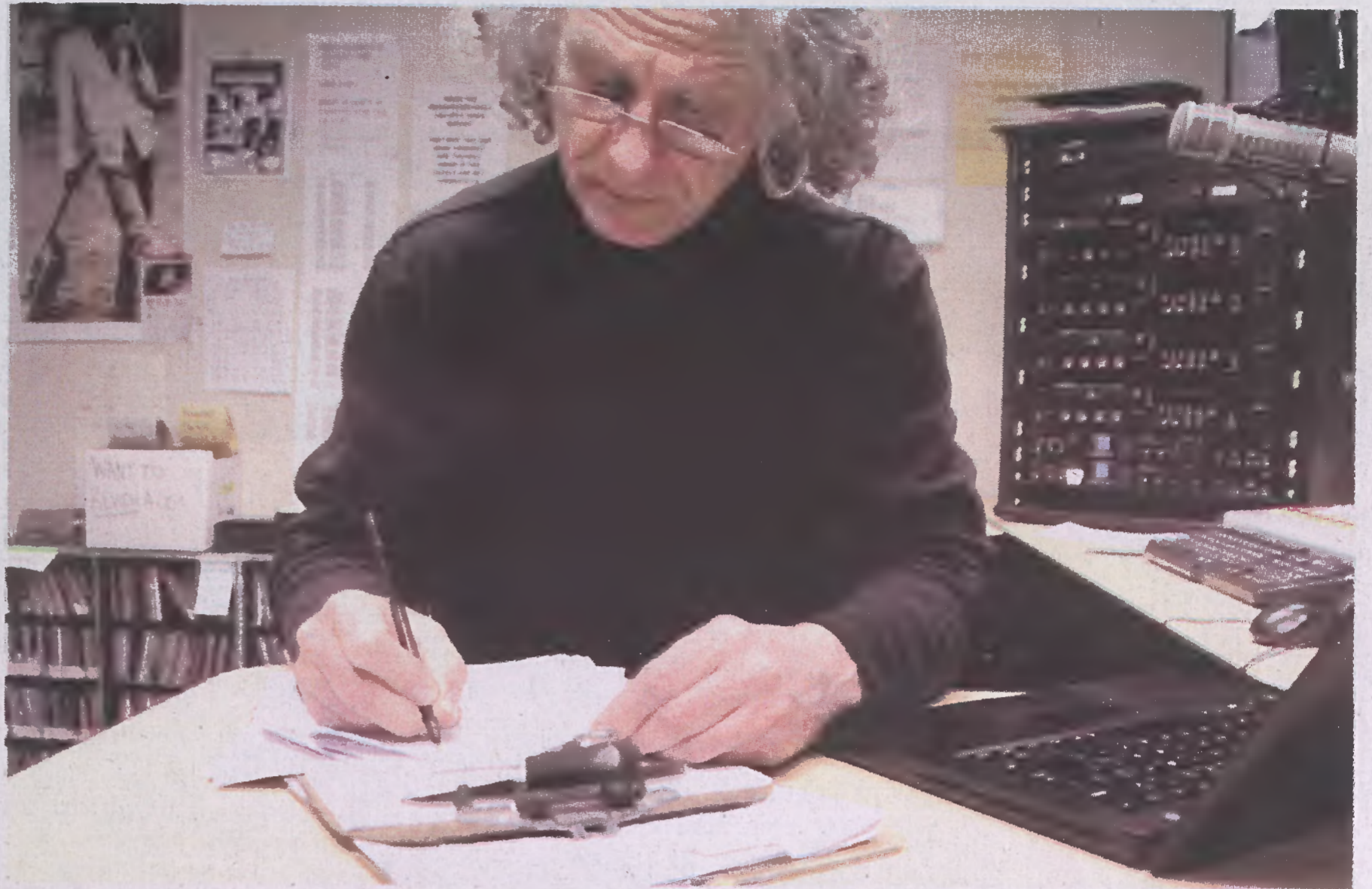
Kami Rowan, faculty advisor for WQFS and associate professor and chair of music, says another one of the biggest changes at the station was the move from the old location to the new, renovated spot next to Campus Life in Founders Hall.

"The station had been in the old Founders location since 1975, so it was like unearthing a deep cave of thousands of recordings and 40 years of history in that old space," said Rowan.

Maddog says that above all, the most glaring change at WQFS is the lack of student involvement these days.

"I find that really scary because the Board is not going to keep this station going as a hobby for aging baby boomers," said Maddog.

"This is your radio station, not mine. I am a guest here. I'm only as good as my last show ... I'm only as good as last Friday night or what I do tonight. Student involvement here is the most important thing because that is what keeps it fresh."



Sherrill Ward, also known as Mad Dog, has hosted the 'Friday Night Rock Party' on WQFS 90.9 as a community DJ for 25 years.

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Contact Parag Budhecha with any questions.

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