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Durham's Morning Men: Music, News and Weather on the A.M. Side



CASH MICHAELS



ALVIN STOWE

They wake you up as early as 6 a.m. if you happen to have your radio set right, and they get you going with a mixture of music, news, weather and the correct time.

They are Durham's morning men, those early robin radio announcers who often snatch you from the comfortable folds of a good night's sleep.

"I'm a human clock," says W DUR's Alvin Stowe, who doubles as morning man and program director. "My basic job is to get people rolling in the morning, to get them back into the world's mainstream without too great a shock."

Cash Michaels, host of WSRC's "Good Morning Show," who was recently named program director, carries the description a step further.

"I figure my job is to get people prepared for the tedium of the workaday world," he said, "to get

them off on the right foot. I want to make them smile in the morning. Some of us feel a little isolated when we first wake up, and we need an outlet to let us know that it's all right to go out of the house."

All of Durham's announcers agree that their basic job is to give their listeners the motivation to get out there and face the world for another day. But they do much more.

"We provide a mixture of news, weather and music," said Rob Gringle, of WDBS's "The New Morning Show." "But there is a certain amount of repetition in our work. People are tuning in at different times according to when they wake up, so we have to constantly update information so that the time, weather, and other pertinent information can include them."

John Van Pelt of WDCG believes that he best serves

his audience by "...trying to bring across a personable approach that is energetic but not abusive."

"We have news, current events, sports, and music every hour on the hour," he continues "and we also keep the people updated as far as the time is concerned."

Serving the listener is the name of the game.

"I would say that my show is basically service oriented," said Stowe of W DUR. "We present 'Telling Like It Was,' a program that deals with little-known facts of black history; we have the 'Carl Rowan Report,' dealing with how major political decisions will affect members of the black community; and even Howard Cosell, and his 'Speaking of Sports' show. I think it's good to be able to get folks going in the morning, and provide them with useful information at the same time."

Cash Michaels of WSRC

sees service to his listeners a little differently.

"I feel that I serve best by projecting a positive attitude to my audience. My wife and I both arise at 4:45 a.m.," he said. (Michaels' wife, Felicia Ledesma, is a news director at W DUR) "and we're basically trying to accomplish the same thing, to get people off on the right foot in the morning."

He also believes that he should come across as a human being.

"I don't want to be just an electronic voice on the radio," he said, "I'm a human being, and I love people. I don't think a person should be in the communications business if he doesn't."

Each of the announcers agrees that their job is to communicate pertinent information to their audiences in a pleasant manner.

According to Alvin Stowe, his target audience is the entire community. "I feel that

my program has something of interest to people of all ages, ethnic and economic backgrounds," he said. "If my program provides inspiration and information to one person, then I consider it a success."

Michaels says, "We are a rhythm-and-blues station, so we automatically have the kids as an audience, but we've been pleasantly surprised to find that we have gotten the Mom-and-Pop audience, and the working people."

Van Pelt of WDCG has a similar philosophy.

"As a 'top 40 station,' we know that we'll get the teenagers, but we would like to have more young adults and adults in our audience, and it seems that we are getting them."

WDBS's Rob Gringle says, "We don't target any age or ethnic group. We just want to wake people up pleasantly, and give them a positive attitude for the day."