

WXYC Keeps the Music Playing

Note: Listeners can tune into WXYC programming at 89.3 FM in the Chapel Hill area, by downloading the station's iTunes app, or by livestreaming from wxyz.org.

Since launching in 1977 to Joni Mitchell's "You Turn Me On I'm a Radio", through winter storms and hurricanes, UNC's student-run radio station WXYC has provided a steady soundtrack to life at UNC and around Chapel Hill.

These days are no different.

Amid the coronavirus outbreak and social distancing measures that keep people physically separated, listeners can still tune in to WXYC and connect to the music they love as the station continues to provide its all-day broadcast.

"It's been amazing," said station manager Elinor Walker, a senior Women's Studies and History double major. "Our team has really stepped up with the skills they have to offer. Our station engineer and others have really figured it out. Everybody has been willing to devote any skills or time they have to making this work."

As it became clear that access to their broadcasting studio in the Carolina Union could be limited by campus closures, WXYC leadership began to create a plan to stay on air. As the holder of an FCC broadcasting license, the station is required to document periods that they are not broadcasting. Going dark risks their license, and though the government may relax standards during the pandemic, WXYC didn't want to take that chance.

Former station manager and current WXYC board member David Van Dokkum connected a remote server-based stream to hardware at the station. A playlist of the station's music was then able to be disseminated to its radio and internet broadcasts.

For now, the station plays music from the remote server, and DJ's can pre-record and upload programming as well.

"We're also experimenting with how to do live shows," van Dokkum said. "This would allow DJ's to do shows from their own computers and do a show while we're in exile. Certainly, we're most excited about that, and are working on the mechanics of it."

Beyond fulfilling FCC requirements, both Walker and van Dokkum agreed that keeping the station on-air provided an important community service

"We're a radio station with a pretty big listener base, so I feel a sense of obligation to continue broadcasting not just to provide emergency information but also to give people some entertainment or something to do," Walker said. "It's important to maintain that right now."

Van Dokkum, who even had a listener contact him to make sure everyone who worked at the station was okay, said that the WXYC community includes students and listeners, alumni who still feel closely connected to the station, and the team of DJs who love sharing music.

"I think we're all excited to just keep doing radio," he said. "There's great potential in these times where people feel stuck at home to be able hear others and listen to voices from the community and know there is a connection there."

Source URL: <https://carolinaunion.unc.edu/news-and-events/news/wxyc-keeps-music-playing>