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## Mic Drop

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# Mic drop

## *Student-run media shifts from analog to digital*

By Travis McGuire

“D

*on't worry about a thing, cause every little thing gonna be alright.”*

Bob Marley's lyrics send a calming melody through the Renshaw Hall basement studio.

David Magnello '22, co-host of the “Love I Reggae Show,” stands behind a microphone.

“We have about a minute and a half,” he says to co-host John Lutaaya '21, referring to the countdown before they begin broadcasting.

They don't know it yet, but Magnello and Lutaaya's show will be one of the last to broadcast from KSLC on 90.3 FM in McMinnville.

This spring, the station shifted to an online-only format. Then distancing measures from the coronavirus pandemic ended the opportunity for students to broadcast together in the studio. Similarly, a few months ago, Linfield's student-run newspaper followed the trend of many legacy media organizations by going online-only.

In light of all this, Marley's message seems like a perfect reminder that life adapts through constant change. Student media, whether written or spoken, will live on in McMinnville — even if it's not in traditional formats.

### **(Near) radio silence**

Professor Emeritus Michael Huntsberger arrived in McMinnville at a tumultuous time in KSLC's history. The journalism and media studies (JAMS) faculty member accepted a position at Linfield in 2005. Just before he arrived, the station he inherited was navigating some licensing issues with the Federal Communications Commission that could have cost KSLC \$10,000. Huntsberger's expertise with local radio helped the college navigate the claim, and it was dismissed.

Luckily for Linfield, he had two decades of experience managing a college radio station. The station he ran at his alma mater, The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, was known for attracting undiscovered bands, like a group of 14- and 15-year-olds from Aberdeen, Washington, who would later call themselves Nirvana.

“I feel blessed that I was a manager of a college radio station that was at the absolute apex of college radio in the '90s,” he says.

Before the digital era, local bands and producers sought out stations like Evergreen's and Linfield's. College radio stations with a defined footprint were how listeners — and record labels — discovered new music and artists.

But today, college radio managers are finding that the ability to access on-demand audio through streaming channels has diminished the appeal of their medium. Streaming services such as Spotify, Pandora and Amazon Music have spawned a generation of people who rarely, if ever, listen to the radio. This poses a problem for small stations like KSLC.

“The fact of the matter is that students don't listen to radio, and students aren't interested in making radio,” says KSLC General Manager Joe Stuart '20. “They're interested in making podcasts and they're listening to podcasts.”

That puts KSLC at a crossroads. On April 2, the station turned its signal over to All Classical Portland, but the studio said in a social media post that it and JAMS are “committed to keeping student voices active and heard.” Its new podcasting network is called Wildcat iRadio.

Linfield isn't alone in the switch to streaming. Six of the 10 college radio stations that broadcast in Oregon do not have a place on the dial. KDUP at the University of Portland has taken it a step further, broadcasting on the streaming service Twitch.



**John Lutaaya '21, co-host of the "Love I Reggae Show," records one of the final broadcasts on KSLC Student Radio. The station turned its signal over to All Classical Portland on April 2.**



KSLC advisor and JAMS Professor Emeritus Michael Huntsberger managed college radio stations in the '90s, when student radio shows had the power to launch new bands.

## Posting, not printing

*The Linfield Review* has published since 1896. Now that it's not in print, but in pixels, editor-in-chief Alex Jensen '20 sees an opportunity for students to be more creative about content. "We can cater it more to what our audience will like or what they should know," she says.

The publication is no longer tied to deadlines for printed editions, so student journalists can be more nimble. Now, *The Linfield Review* posts online in real time on topics such as the Linfield University name change announcement, or ongoing coverage of the novel coronavirus. Jensen's team can also shape its photography and word count to better fit the stories. "If an article only needs 300 words, then you only write 300 words," she says.

The switch to digital-only has drawbacks, though. *The Linfield Review's* team dynamic has changed as a result of removing print editions, which required all-day — and sometimes all-night — editing sessions. "We don't see each other as much as we used to," Jensen says.

## Off air

Back in Renshaw Hall, Lutaaya fades down the volume of Marley's popular song. Calling himself "Laddy, the True Reggae Daddy," he addresses an unknown number of listeners.

Unlike many of his classmates, Lutaaya, a native of Uganda, grew up on broadcasts over the airwaves. "I always loved radio," he says. It seems somehow fitting, then, that "Laddy" will send the station out on a positive note.

## Linfield podcasts

The transition from broadcast radio to podcasts was already in motion when KSLC transferred its license to All Classical Portland in April. These three podcasts launched ahead of the transition or shortly thereafter.

### THE CAT CALL

Hosts: **Elin Johnson '20** and **Elisia Harder '20**

Theme: Issues that matter to students, told with humor and levity. The Cat Call dedicated its most recent podcast to COVID-19.

### THE BREAKING POINT

Hosts: **Angel Rosas '20** and **Carson Ryder '20**

Theme: Timely issues in politics. Past episodes have covered Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court confirmation hearings and President Trump at the G20 Summit.

### PURPLE REIGN

Host: **Joe Stuart '20**, KSLC/Wildcat iRadio general manager

Theme: Men's basketball. Stuart documents the team's rise from the bottom of the Northwest Conference to the 2019-20 league champions in a limited series.

He and Magnello are the last people to ever say on-air, "This is KSLC and KSLC-HD1 McMinnville, student-powered radio at Linfield College."