

CATALYST

RESOURCES FOR CREATIVE LIVING

Culture: Radio Changed My Life

KRCL started small, made a big difference

By Barb Guy

In 1980, two years out of high school and working at a downtown book and record store (the old, real, Cosmic Aeroplane), I found myself, a naive girl from Holladay, presented with the fascinating and edgy urban world. The groovy Cosmic was next door to a funky subterranean art cinema called The Blue Mouse; both were in brick storefronts on 100 South.

The Cosmic let certain people borrow unsealed LP's (either shop demo copies or used records that were for sale). I would jot down what these people borrowed, thumb-tack the lists to the shelf behind the cash register, and later, check the records back in. It turned out that these music-savvy people were DJs at something called KRCL, a tiny, seedy radio station located in office space above the Blue Mouse. So I began to listen. The station was probably about a year old at the time, and the signal was so weak that many people called it "Krackle."

I was agog at the people who would come to the shop from the station. There were punk

rockers, grandmotherly arts aficionados, people with physical disabilities, people speaking dozens of languages and looking for music to match, crazy people, proudly-out gay and lesbian people, policy wonks, African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, poets, comedians, rabble rousers, peace nerds. They were 100 shades of oil and 100 languages of water.

I became a regular listener, gave money during an early radiothon, and went next door to pick up my premium. It was a black T-shirt with the sleeves ripped out, still sticky from being spray-painted with some punk slogan. I finally signed up for volunteer training in 1981, thinking it would be fun to stuff envelopes or help around the office now and then. Submitting a demo tape was a requirement at the end of the training, so I prepared a sample jazz show even though I had no desire to be on the air. I ended up hosting a music show for 10 years, and I served four years on the station's board of directors.

Looking back, I can't imagine how my life would have turned out if I had never intersected with KRCL. Everything about

the me of today can be traced to what the 20-year-old me found by chance at KRCL.

KRCL gave me many friends that to this day I love like family. KRCL taught me about community, politics and diversity and those experiences led me to my fields of study in college. I met my dear husband through the station and we've been together for 18 years. I found my voice, my worldview, and myself at KRCL.

KRCL still changes people's lives. Next month the station turns 25. In the December CATALYST, we'll review KRCL's past and maybe take a glimpse at their future.

Barb Guy has now written enough stories for CATALYST to be listed on our masthead as a regular contributor.

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