

SpiritLive: you're on the air

*Campus radio station finds a studio,
a voice and a vision*

By Samra Habib

Special to the Ryersonian

There is commendable assurance in his eyes as he articulates the importance of “college radio” for a “college audience” run by “college students.” Noah Zivitz, a third-year radio and television arts student and general manager and music director of the once unsettled campus radio station, SpiritLive, is behind its revival.

SpiritLive, an acronym for Student Produced Internet and Radio Interactive Technologies, broadcasts on the internet and is predominantly run by RTA students.

Prior to last year, the studios were used by RTA students to experiment with the equipment. Eventually, Zivitz was approached by RTA faculty to utilize the studios and the equipment to start a radio station.

As he spiritedly recites the heights this project has accelerated to, the studio on the first floor of the Rogers Communication Centre is abuzz with bohemian DJs talking back and forth on the mic, practicing for Monday’s broadcast.



Jason

Curran / Ryersonian staff

Leo Shia smiles as he laces up some smooth and silky tunes

The scene is vibrant. Walls covered with posters of Ku Fu Records and an advertisement for DJ Shadow's The Private Press.

Zivitz is primarily enthusiastic about the student-run aspect of running a campus radio station.

"One of the big problems on college stations, especially at the university level, is that they're very nuclear, they're very introverted, and often times the groups are mostly non-students, it doesn't make sense that non-students are going to learn on school campus," says Zivitz.

His previous experience running a campus radio station prepared Zivitz for aggressively running a successful radio station. After his stint at Dawson College's radio station in Quebec, CIXS, he decided to study RTA at Ryerson. This is the first time he has started a radio station from its inception.

The beginning wasn't very rewarding. The lack of recognition meant assertive publicity on Zivitz's part. Last year, he went to different RTA classes to inform students about the potentials of this project. The result was disheartening. He received little support from fellow RTA students.

"I can't blame them. It hadn't been run well before. And because I wanted to turn it into something new, it didn't flow well."

This led to subscribing to the College Music Journal, the most recognized trade journal for the college radio industry. In return, the journal publishes SpiritLive's music charts. As well, SpiritLive receives new releases at least three weeks before they hit the commercial air waves. Some of the major record labels that supply music to the station are Warner Brothers, Universal, EMG and Sony. But Zivitz insists that the music played on the station will never mirror the selections on KISS 92 or 102.1 The Edge. "We play Bright Eyes, Mars Volta. If you can find one commercial radio stations that plays Mars Volta, I will walk out of this station," says Zivitz.

Recent seal of approval by Chart Magazine has unveiled the capabilities of the station. More publicity has meant a high number of applicants who want to be associated with the station. "Now that we have a solid reputation, the new DJs are all excited, because they know who we are."

He introduces me to Nikko DeTranquilli, a blonde, dreadlocked soft-spoken man,

and his partner, Leo Shia. Together, they host “Noise Therapy,” a hip-hop show on Fridays from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., introducing listeners to rare beats.

“We play good music, as oppose to what’s being pushed. We’re not just playing hip hop, old-school soul, we’re playing reggae, we’re playing some drum n’ bass,” Shia says.

As an avid fan of Italian music and Planet Asia, DeTranquilli supports a content smile. “Playing music is more of a way to express myself, and I think because it’s not expressed anywhere else, I like to have other people enjoy them. I’m just having a good time.”

Zivitz himself is trying to get greater financial support to comply with his vision for the station. His handle on every possible situation is quite apparent. As we sit down to chat, he rises up unexpectedly as a faint noise arises from one of the DJ booths. He pushes some buttons until the noise has evaporated.

There is the absence of an operating budget. RTA helps out whenever possible, but more financial support is vital.

Zivitz, along with program director, Mike De Eyre put together a sales package over the summer and is waiting to have it approved by the RTA faculty in order to get sponsors.

Until the station does get financial support from external sources, the directors are planning to take advantage of any broadcasting opportunities, like pub nights or any other concert events on campus to make the station known.

“It’d be great if we had our own contingency. And we don’t need \$90,000. We need like \$600,” Zivitz says.

www.ryerson.ca/webcast/spirit.html

