WEVL: A Brief History

45 Years of Independent, Listener-supported Volunteer Radio

1976 was a memorable year. The country celebrated the Bicentennial, Jimmy Carter was elected president, new music trends like disco and punk were emerging, and in Memphis, a new volunteer radio station went on the air.

It was in April of that year when WEVL first signed on the air from an old two-story house in the 1300 block of Court Avenue. The station had a mere 10 watts of power and could only be heard in the Midtown area.

WEVL knew it would never be much of a factor in Memphis radio with only 10 watts, so the station applied to the FCC to raise its power. This request was granted; however, it took several years for the station to raise the money to buy a tower, transmitter, and all the necessary equipment. WEVL even had to go off the air for a period of time while still trying to raise funds.

Finally, in February 1986, the station returned to the airwaves at higher power with a coverage area of 50 miles. At last, the entire Memphis metro area could hear WEVL!

It was also in 1986 that volunteer and Board member Judy Dorsey took over as station manager. Under Dorsey, WEVL was able to develop a real membership base, increase fundraising events, and begin holding pledge drives. These on-air drives held twice a year have been by far the most important source of income for the station.

Over the years, WEVL also produced many benefit concerts at different venues, including multiple shows at the legendary Antenna Club with such icons of Memphis rock as Alex Chilton and Tav Falco’s Panther Burns. In 1989 WEVL had the first of many Blues On The Bluff concerts overlooking the Mississippi River, with Lee Baker & The Agitators and Joyce Cobb’s Blues Band.

From the old house on Court to the Exchange Building, WEVL has had multiple studio locations over the years, but in November 1990, the station moved to its current location in the South Main Arts District. The station has been proud to be a pioneer in the redevelopment of the south end of downtown Memphis.

From the very start, WEVL offered the most diverse music programming of any radio station in Memphis, and was the only station to play such important genres as blues and rockabilly. The station has always heavily featured Memphis music and invited musicians from Memphis and around the world to play to live in the studio.

Popular volunteer DJs from the station’s early days who are still on air today include Memphis Music icon Joyce Cobb and Jim “Ridge Runner” Lillard.

Our all-time most popular DJ, Dee “Cap’n Pete” Henderson, walked into the station in 1982 when we were having a “Bluesathon.” Several of the volunteers convinced him he could do a show, so the Blues Cruise on Friday nights was born. Sadly, Dee died in 2008, but fortunately the station has an archive of his programs, so we are able to continue to air them every Friday night at 9:00.

Another of our most acclaimed programs has been Bashful Bob’s Sho-Nuff Country program that started in 1997. Although Bob passed away a few years ago, we continue to air archived programs every Wednesday morning at 10:00.

The most exciting change over the years, however, has been the ability to stream the signal on the Internet, allowing listeners anywhere in the world to enjoy WEVL. The station now has listeners and members from Japan to the U.K.

As WEVL enters its 46th year, we remain the only independent listener-supported station in Memphis. Not owned, operated or influenced by any government agency, university, school system, or commercial entity, WEVL’s funding comes primarily from our listeners. Our achievements to date reflect 45 years of growth, countless volunteer hours of effort, and millions of dollars in listener donations. And we continue to work toward making WEVL even better, thanks to our members and volunteers.

—Brian Craig, WEVL Program Director
### Sunday
- **6-10 am** The Best of Singing Down in Dixie<br>Southern gospel quartet music from the WEVL archives with Charlie May.<br>- **9 am** Off the Record<br>Rock from the last 20 years, hosted by Jessica.

### Monday
- **6-8 am** Welcome to the Working Week<br>John B. Joyce kicks off the work week with a dose of good old rock 'n' roll.<br>- **9-10 am** The Deep Blues Show<br>Classical and traditional blues with Steve.<br>- **10 am** Mood Swings<br>Poetry from our archives with R&B, rock, pop or psychedelic, re-app an array of Memphis artists from the 50s to today.

### Tuesday
- **6-8 am** My Pet Rock Show<br>Rock and roll with Chad.<br>- **8 am** The Many Moons of Ben Vaughn<br>Ben plays a variety of music from across the decades.<br>- **10 am** Folk Song Fiesta<br>A wide variety of folk music with Steve.<br>

### Wednesday
- **6 am** My Morning Mixtape<br>A musical mix hosted by Virginia.<br>- **6-8 am** The Modern World<br>Punk, post-punk & new wave from the late ‘70s through the ‘80s along with current Memphis music carrying on the tradition, with Lee.<br>- **8-10 am** Blues Today<br>Contemporary, up-tempo blues with Chuck Porter.<br>- **10 am** Down in the Alley<br>Rhythm & Blues from the ‘40s to the ‘70s, hosted by Eddie Hankins.

### Thursday
- **6-8 am** River City Revue<br>County, rock and blues with Melanie.<br>- **8-10 am** Memphis Mystery Train<br>A musical mix hosted by Virginia.<br>- **10 am** Out on the Side<br>Traversing the back waters of 40 years’ worth of pop music garage, folk, punk, country and R&B-oriented rock with Jeremy.<br>- **10 pm** Nightbeat<br>Adult night music with Ben Vaughn, exclusively on WEVL.

### Friday
- **6 am** The Best of Cap’n Pete’s Blues Cruise<br>Stone cold blues from the WEVL archives, hosted by the late Dee “Cap’n Pete” Henderson. Winner of the Blues Foundation’s Keeping the Blues Alive Award.<br>- **9 am** Soul Stew<br>Blues, rock, rhythm and soul with Brett Fleming.<br>- **10 pm** Against the Grain<br>Independent punk and hardcore from the late ’70s and early ’80s with Uncle Roy.<br>- **11 pm** Rapper’s Delight<br>Hip hop with Andria.

### Saturday
- **6-8 am** Bluff City Barn Dance<br>Bluesgrass and children from way back then to here and now. With The Ridge Runner.<br>- **9-11 pm** Strands of the Celtic Knot<br>Music from the Highland Bagpipe Tour to the Celtic music you love. Presented by Robert Campbell.
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What Members Receive

For 45 years WEVL has been providing the Mid-South with volunteer programming that is diverse, educational, fun, and different from anything else you will hear on the air. Become a member of WEVL and support an alternative voice in Memphis area radio by making a donation of $40 or more. In return, you will receive a WEVL bumper sticker and a year’s subscription to the WEVL Program Guide—plus your donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Send in your membership today!

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