

TUFTS RADIO SHOW **THEY ARE WOMEN,** CELEBRATES

Sue Edelman's heart raced as she asked her first question to Terry Gross. "I have to preface this interview by saying that it's kind of intimidating to me to ask questions of someone who's been described as . . . one of the best in the business in interviewing. So, I was wondering . . . if you *like* being interviewed." This was Edelman's favorite interview to date and helped put her radio show on the map. "Oh, well I used to really hate it . . . I just didn't want people to know me outside of what they naturally found out on the program," said Gross, host of PBS's acclaimed show *Fresh Air*.

Edelman conducted this 1992 interview with Gross during a segment on *Something About the Women*, a radio show that broadcasts on Tufts University's WMFO 91.5 FM on Saturday mornings from 10am until noon. She is part of a five-woman volunteer-run collective that fuels the engine of the show.

Others include Laura Burgess, Laurie Young, Jane Powers and Amanda Schreckengaust.

The show, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, has as its mission, according to Edelman, "to give voice to women artists across all [musical] genres."

It is to Edelman's knowledge the longest-running women's music radio show in the country, starting out in 1975 with a small following and a distinctly feminist—largely lesbian—agenda. According to Powers, "Women were getting short shrift in terms of radio air time . . . and the play lists were narrow." The program on WMFO was a chance to change that, said Powers.

Edelman said that when the show began there were only two independent women's record labels: *Olivia*, and Holly Near's *Redwood*. In fact, the name of the show—*Something About the Women*—came from a title of a song by Holly Near, a pioneer of women's music, from her album called *Imagine My Surprise*.

Marilyn McCrory and Dawn Paul, deejays from 1980 to 1986, supplied insight into the show's early years. In a recent joint interview, they explained that the show originally aired from 6 to 10am. However, they and the other members of the collective were so successful at on-air fundraising that their slot was moved to 10am to 2pm. Other members of the collective during those years included Jen Kruse, Laurie Plescher, Susan Bernstein and Susan Tiernan.

As time passed, the feminist slant has relaxed a bit. Now in 2005 you may even hear a male voice, say Tony Bennett, crooning with KD Lang. But while the singers vary, the mission has remained the same: giving airplay to women, especially lesser-known artists like Jen Schwartz, Laurie Krantz, Melissa Ferrick and Katie Curtis. Sometimes these unknowns

go on to make it big. Ellen Giurleo, who deejayed for *Something About the Women* during the mid-eighties, had this to say: "Chris Newport [another *Something About the Women* DJ] had friends in Atlanta who were telling her about a group that was getting popular down there . . . they sent us a crude EP [recording] and we played it on the show." The group? The Indigo Girls.

Others who have been played on the show and/or been interviewed and have gone on to become household names include Tracy Chapman, Patty Larkin, Cris Williamson and Alicia Keyes.

Is it the chance to discover the next Tracy Chapman that keeps this collective willing to get out of bed on a Saturday morning? They agree that the interviews are a highlight.

However, it is the connection with the audience that makes it so worthwhile. Powers vocalized what she and the other members agree on: "I like it when people call in . . . I like exposing people to music they might not have heard before the show. [It's important for me] to be co-creative with the audience."

Although the basic format of the show includes songs sets, public service announcements and occasional interviews, each member of the collective decides the format for her show. Some let the music speak for themselves with very little commentary. Others include more public affairs information.

For Powers and others, *Something About the Women* fulfilled a longing to be a deejay.

For Giurleo, it launched her career in radio, which, in turn, led to opportunities in music publicity and promotion. She has now set her sights on music supervision—which involves picking out appropriate music for a TV show or a movie.

And what about the goals for *Something About the Women*? Edelman says that one goal is to reach more local listeners if the WMFO signal strengthens. Another is to get the word out about the fact that the show is available worldwide via the Internet.

Something About the Women can be heard from 10am until noon on WMFO-FM 91.5. The show is also available by receiving the signal over the internet by logging on to www.wmfo.org and clicking on "Listen."



HEAR THEM ROAR:

30 YEARS OF WOMEN'S MUSIC

BY RHEA KOCH-SULTAN