



GETTING TO KNOW WMMR'S AFTERNOON ROCKER JAXON

by Markus

Jaxon does afternoon drive at 93.3FM, WMMR. He is a major champion of the great local music scene in Philly and has gone full-throttle to bring as much attention to it as possible, so that people everywhere can hear how much musical talent is in this city.

The life of an on-air radio personality can be nomadic, lonely, obscenely stressful and very difficult. Radio is also one of the greatest professions to get into; it is rewarding, every day is different and it's a blast. As the afternoon jock at WMMR, Jaxon has experienced the ups and downs and has much to say about radio, working at MMR and about the incredible local music scene in Philadelphia.

Jaxon got into his field after a creative writing teacher told him he had a big mouth and should pursue a career in radio. He took his teacher's advice and got his first job in sales at a top 40 radio station. He only lasted three months in that job, because Jaxon would go to all the morning sales meetings and then go back home and sleep for the day. At night, he would then head back into the station and sit in with the night show to watch them work and learn from them. In three months at this job, he did not sell one ad, not one. He was terminated, but Jaxon was there long enough to catch "the fever". The fever may be described in this way; Radio is like heroin: it's highly addictive and when you don't have a job in radio, you really jones for one. When you don't have radio you get withdrawal, dementia, mood swings, depression and more. Once it's in your blood you are never the same.

After Jaxon's early taste of radio, he decided to take a semester off from college and move to Steamboat Springs, CO with some friends to be a ski bum. That one semester off turned into four years and while in Steamboat, Jaxon taught skiing and snowboarding during the day and did radio at KFMU at night. Jaxon's first on-air job at KFMU came



when a roommate of his who did their weekend overnights quit and helped Jaxon get a meeting with the station's Program Director. Jaxon was asked if he any experience and he "lied through [his] teeth" to get his first on-air job. He told the PD he had a bunch of experience without expanding on what this experience was. Jaxon got hired to do weekend overnights and was their new night guy within a few weeks.

After four years of working two jobs in Steamboat, Jaxon moved to Rapid City, South Dakota to go back to school. He wasn't back for very long when a full time opening at a rock station came up and the rest was history. Jaxon "[has] been very fortunate to work at some of the greatest rock stations in the country" including WHJY in Providence, KBPI in Denver and of course MMR here in Philly. He has also worked in Boston, Salt Lake, Grand Junction, CO and Springfield, MO.

With a passion for music and radio, Jaxon moved to Philadelphia at a time when WMMR was going through a major overhaul. Here's what Jaxon had to say about Philly, the local music scene and WMMR.

Were you nervous moving to Philly because it was a new city?

Jaxon: I was excited to get back to the East Coast. That's the kind of radio I dig; it's a different kind of radio. It's a little faster-paced, it's more aggressive, it's got more bite, it's a little more cynical and it's a faster-paced lifestyle.

Did you have any expectations or fears when you first moved to Philly?

Jaxon: Radio is a fun career. It's one of the greatest jobs in the world. The flip side to that is it's one of the worst jobs in the world. It's an awesome job, but not very stable. The upside to it not being very stable is I've gotten to see and work in some great cities. I've been able to travel and [have] lived all over this country, thanks to radio. It's really nice to be at a station like WMMR though, because of [its] heritage. There is no fear that the radio station is going to change formats anytime in my lifetime.

Who was the first local band you saw live?

Jaxon: "I think Ike. I went down to Grape St for the very first time to see a surprise show with G. Love because I heard through the grapevine there was going to be a surprise show [there]. Somebody else from [WMMR] was down there and introduced me to Joe Cahill, the owner of Grape St. We started talking about local music and his club; it just kind of developed from there. Joe and I have the same passion about music. I was digging what he was doing and it was a cool scene. When Y100 went away, it worked to our benefit and we picked up where they left off. One of my first nights down there I saw Ike and I remember just being blown away by them and just thinking WOW! Is this the level of talent in this town? Are all the local bands this good, because these guys are awesome?"

Some of the first bands I saw were Noosphere, IKE, Head, Jealousy Curve, and Halestorm. Right off the bat I was thoroughly impressed and I thought that the talent level was so superior to any other scene; there were so many good bands. Normally you live in a city and there are three or four really good local bands. Philadelphia's got...sheer quantity. There's just a wealth of talent in the scene here."

With the abundance of talent, do you think Philly has the potential to blow up like a Seattle scene?

Jaxon: "When you talk about Seattle in the 90's, Los Angeles in the 80's, San Francisco in the 70's, you're talking about the evolution of rock. It's just kind of where those things happened. It's rock and it's ever-evolving. If you'll notice, those scenes blow up when there is a big change in the sound of music and the direction things are going. The thing that all those cities had in common was they had a wealth of talent. We've got that wealth of talent. Now it's just waiting for rock to evolve and putting the spotlight on your scene. [This] is what we're trying to do at the radio station. A lot of times all it takes is one band busting out of a city to put the spotlight on that city, so people start to take notice. We're working on that. We've got Silvertide signed out of Philly, Halestorm signed to Atlantic and we are anxiously awaiting the release of their record. Jealousy Curve won the 2005 Zippo Hot Tour. Stealing December won it this year. Winning the Zippo Hot Tour two years in a row bodes well for the local scene here. It's all about trying to...get national recognition. We need to get the scene recognized regionally and nationally."

Automatic Black and The Burning Brides are Philly bands that were on their way before things, unfortunately, went downhill for them.

Jaxon: "Unfortunately, Philly also seems to have some sort of curse. A lot of bands have gotten the shaft in this city. You hear a lot of horror stories about bands being dropped before their record was released, or about their records being shelved. It probably happens everywhere."

Are you doing more with the local scene than you ever anticipated, and did you expect it to get to where it is now?

Jaxon: That's where you gotta thank programming staff at MMR like Bill

Weston, Chuck Damico and Rabbi and all those guys for really stepping up. I have never worked at a radio station that is so willing to support the local artist. We started with just the local music night at Grape Street. I was coming back to station with CD's and EP's from these bands and was raving about the scene to people like Bill. At first it was like pulling teeth, [but] I was persistent. I kept beating them over the head with it and kept running into Bill's office with CDs from Halestorm and Ike and Jealousy Curve and playing them for him.

Then, things started to happen. I [went] back to Bill and say 'told ya so'. There's nothing like that to give your ear a little clout, because the bands I was bringing to him [like Jealousy Curve and Halestorm] were starting to do things. Slowly but surely, I started hitting them up with the idea [of doing a] local music feature, but [not] on Sunday night at 10 o'clock. There's a reason radio stations put the local music show on at 10 o'clock on a Sunday night. That's the safest place to put unfamiliar music.

I don't remember how it came to fruition, but I finally convinced him to let me try a local music feature during my show. I went to Bill with [the idea to do it] in the 6 o'clock hour...during drive time, when people are listening and going to hear it. In my opinion, when you introduce a song to somebody, they enjoy having an opinion whether they like it or dislike it. They enjoy listening to it and having someone ask them 'what do you think of this?' People will kick back in their cars, office and/or at home and say 'that was cool' or 'ehh, that was ok.' They enjoy weighing-in and being a part of the show.

From that came the idea [that] once this grows, I'll hit 'em up [to] do a compilation CD. I [presented it] to Bill as, 'How bout we take all these bands we've been spinning as local shots on the air and put out [a] CD with a huge release party? We'll give this money to charity.' It was another way to get the music out to the masses; also a way to give people a great sampling of what's available in Philadelphia. You could buy one CD and get turned on to 15 of the best bands in Philadelphia.

What's next?

Jaxon: I'd love to see a local music festival of some sort.

What could the Philly music scene do to make more noise?

Jaxon: Keep doing what you are doing. The coolest thing about the Philly scene is there is a real sense of family, a lot of teamwork and cooperation. I love seeing bands [come] out to see other band's sets and show up to each others' CD release parties. So, continue to hone your craft, work as a team, **PROMOTE! PROMOTE! PROMOTE!** And remember, if we can get the Philly scene recognized as a whole, everyone benefits! Keep up the hard work and I'll continue to do everything I can to expose local music to MMR listeners.

Whatever is next for Jaxon and MMR's involvement in the local music scene will continue to help Philly make noise around the country. The machine Jaxon started evolved from his passion for music, his love for radio and the enjoyment of getting out and enjoying the Philly music scene. Don't forget to go to wmmr.com and check out Jaxon's Local Shots Podcast. It's one more way Jaxon has provided a place to hear the great music in the Philly scene. Plus, you can purchase both of his Local Shot's CD's, Volume I and II, from the website as well.

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