



the dirt

Driftless Community Radio Newsletter

Fall 2026



Pictured: Six Farmers Market Buskers squeeze into Studio B while performing live at WDRT studios on air. Read all about our progress on the Studio C Project (page 7) to learn more!

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One-day FALL PLEDGE DRIVE

Thursday 9/17 • 6am-6pm

6 **Driftless Morning - Jim Hallberg**

8 **The Friendly Show + Bill Fiorella**

9 **Quiz Show Live - Ed Holahan + Guests**

10 **Que Sera Sera - Sarah Caldwell**

11 **The Train - Paul Fairchild**

12 **Democracy Now**

1 **Shapeshifter Shoes = K'O'B + M'Lou**

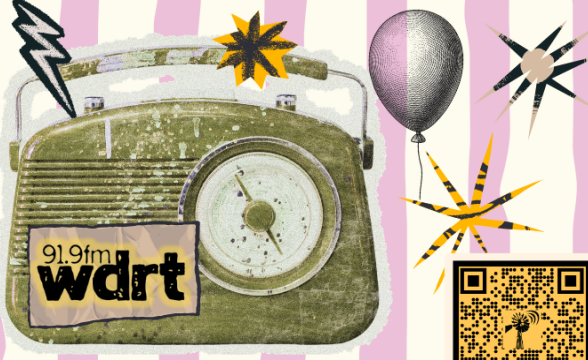
2 **Saturdays with Syd**

3 **Slydeman's Drivetime Chill - Micah**

4 **Booty Jamboree = MC SL!M + Cullen**

5 **Mister Koppa's Neighborhood**

\$5,000 Cash Match thanks to ORGANIC VALLEY



Scan to Learn More!



WDRT.ORG/DONATE

1-DAY PLEDGE DRIVE ON SEPT. 17TH



Do you know what time it is? It's time to **CELEBRATE OUR SWEET 16TH BIRTHDAY!** Which also means it's time to pledge your support during our One-day Fall Pledge Drive, 6am to 6pm on Thursday, September 17th. Your financial support not only funds our programming, but is helping to ensure this kind of community-powered radio continues to exist in the Driftless Region, and across the globe!

WDRT broadcasts 24/7/365. Listener support gives us editorial freedom and musical independence in ways other funding models don't. We aren't beholden to shareholders or algorithms, and we like it that way!

Donate this pledge season to help us continue sharing alternative news & talk podcasts, independent voices and varied music by the hour, as well as providing a free network to amplify community resources.

To kick off this pledge drive, we have a **\$5,000 Challenge Match from Organic Valley!** Any donation amount is welcome, so tune in Thursday and listen for your chance to double your contribution! Scan the QR code to the left to learn more about our one-day pledge drive.



Shana Meshbeshier sat down with Chris Dunn Friday, August 14th* to find out how he came to have three shows at WDRT. *NOTE: Dunn rocking a t-shirt featuring the illustrious Dolly Parton – 11 days before her passing... R.I.P. Dolly!

MUSIC & MEMORIES: A CONVERSATION WITH DJ CHRIS DUNN

SLM: First of all, you are involved in how many shows at WDRT right now?

CD: Three awesome shows. They're all legacy shows – shows that I think have played a major role in our station's existence. I've been involved with them for over a decade.

SLM: Yeah, cool. But let's also mention the other volunteer stuff. Did you know that there's now a "Talking Trail - Viroqua murals" tour people can enjoy with their devices? You helped Pete Hodapp with the astronaut mural on the south side of our building, right?

CD: Yeah, with the McIntosh Memorial Library tour, right? Yeah, that was Pete and me, and you can see us in that one mural video*, right? I love it. Peter Hodapp is the sweetest person on this planet. I love Pete.



(*that one mural video - here: <https://bit.ly/4A3vURA>)

SLM: And he used to have a WDRT show... Did you ever do a show with him?

CD: He's had many shows. But no. But we've definitely influenced each other's shows ~ many times.

SLM: So speaking of influence, WDRT's 16th birthday is on the day of this September's pledge drive. Tell me – when you were 16, what music was influencing you?

CD: Well, we're gonna jump back to 14 year old me, okay, because it influenced "16-year-old me." It was 1989. Some older boys from La Crescent took me to *First Avenue* in the Twin Cities for the very first time to see *Dinosaur Jr.*! And the *Flaming Lips* opened for them! Yeah, and I was 14 years old, and it just blew my mind. That much noise, and power, and camaraderie, and people just being awesome to each other, and these older boys were being awesome to me?!

So then – I was at a really rough point in my life when I was 16. I was institutionalized. But my Grandma would send me tapes. All the way from Arizona to Red Wing, Minnesota. I was really wanting aggressive stuff at the time. Like, she would send me stuff from *Ministry* and *The Cure*.

SLM: Wait, wait, wait. Ya' gotta tell me – how was your Grandma finding this kind of music for you?!

CD: I used to spend a lot of summers down there when I was in my early teenage years, and I was very into Thrasher Magazine. And so I would get turned on to Punk Rock and wild music. And we'd go into Tucson and she'd, you know, *hate the clothes I had*. So I found a skateboard shop and picked out gear there. Then I asked at the skateboard shop where I could find good music in that area, because I was coming from up here in Houston County, Minnesota, deep in The Driftless. And so these cool cats at the skateboard shop sent me to the cassette store at the local mall. And they

...CHRIS DUNN CONTINUED...

actually had an awesome selection of incredible things.

SLM: Nice. Nice. Okay, now I know how much you love your three daughters. While they're still young-ish, have you tried to influence their music style or help them explore?

CD: Not necessarily influence as much as encourage! And discourage (chuckles).

SLM: Yeah. Like, who's one you've discouraged? Some Top 40 or something?

CD: No, I mean, I love Pop Music, too. Sure. If it's got a catchy hook, I'm in. But I really just try to encourage my daughters to be, you know, *into stuff*. I would say, like if they came to me and they're like, "Dad, have you heard the new *Hootie in the Blowfish*?" I'm like, "No. I have not... And I don't plan to!" You know – that kind of thing.

But I love hearing Mahala on the radio. She's been here for six, maybe seven years now?! She started while she was in high school! Jim Hallberg named her show *After School Special*. Now she's 24 years old and a kindergarten teacher – which makes it even more so the *After School Special*. Yeah, and she does a great job. Just beautiful. Brings a cool variety... Cool variety – AND a beautiful voice. And we're out in public and people are like, "Oh – YOU'RE Mahala!" "Oh, I recognize the voice!" "Oh, I recognize the name." "Oh, I love your show." Yeah, it's so great.

SLM: I love that. That's seriously good to hear shows getting recognized! Okay, so let's talk about the WDRT shows you've been a part of for so long. All of your shows are pretty incredible. There's rotating Mondays with the *Bad Axe Tap*, rotating Thursdays on *Global Beat*, and then you take a Saturday shift on *Reggae Pon Yard* once a month, correct? I feel like it gives you such an opportunity to offer the really eclectic variety of music that you enjoy listening to. Is there a favorite among them?

CD: Maybe... There's not necessarily a favorite, but there is an easiest. I'm a really, really, really good Reggae DJ. That just comes naturally. You know, I grew up on Punk Rock. But after moving to Minneapolis, and being on the West Bank, and Hard Times Cafe and the New Riverside Cafe, and being around all sorts of like West Indies folks, and just really fantastic people from Ethiopia, and people that were bringing all of this other stuff.

SLM: Wait, the West Bank of Minneapolis? That's where KFAI Radio is located, right?! I'd like to think

that if there's such a thing as a sister radio, they're like our "auntie" radio station.

CD: For sure. And I joined tons of collectives. But the first one I was in was the New Riverside Cafe, which Jim Hallberg was a part of that as well!!! And in our alley, where we'd go out back and smoke cigarettes or whatever, the DJ's were all right there across the street in their alley. And we all built strong relationships together. And I got turned on to so much cool stuff there through KFAI. I was blessed with an ear for weird music. You know, these guys were turning me on to leaps and bounds of sounds ahead of their time. A couple of my favorite shows were the *Echo Chamber*, which was the Dub show, and *Rocket Ship Ska Trip*, a Reggae show. I was a punk rocker, but Ska Punk music was coming up, and *Operation Ivy* and *The Clash* – and all these people were pulling in Jamaican rhythms.

When I finally, really connected in – because my only experience with it was like *Bob Marley and the Wailers* or *UB40*... that stuff sounded corny to me at the time. And then I realized that there was a real message of perseverance and struggle, you know, and I loved it. Yeah, it was great.



SLM: Let's jump to *Global Beat*.

CD: Yeah, that show's my baby. I love *Global Beat*. DJ Kirsten and I evolved it out of the *Radio Free Viroquagrad* show, with host

Genie Nordskog, 'cuz we wanted to expand beyond Eastern European music.

In the Twin Cities, there was this huge influx of Somali people coming in, and Ethiopian people. And all this amazing music and amazing food and amazing smells – they were, you know, moving into our poor, punk rock neighborhood. But they were like, "you guys seem okay. You're white – but you've got blue hair," you know. So we all started to get to know each others' cultures. Yeah, and I did that to the best of my abilities – but it all changed when I went and saw *Gogol Bordello*... The band threw an after-concert dance party at *First Avenue* in the 7th Street Entry. Singer Eugene Hütz DJ'd. It blew my mind – it – was – everything! It was like listening to all these combined sounds together. Like a cohesive, rowdy, rebellious unity in the form of a dance party. Yeah – it was definitely a punk-y reggae party. It was so fun – like a dance-

hall full of Turkish Psychedelic Rock and Ska Punk music. It was everything I've ever wanted to hear – ever – and then I really just dove deep into what I heard that night.

I ended up emailing Eugene and I was like, "Hey, I see you guys are coming to town and you seriously blew my mind!" It was this kind of perfect Midwest Balkan Dancehall

scene. And they're like, "Okay, let's throw a party!" So for the next three shows when they came through the area, I would DJ with them for their after parties, and I got to know them. They're such a multicultural group from all over. Like: The Ukraine, Peru, Ethiopia. Texas, and Brooklyn. Everywhere. It really blew my mind wide open to that international sound. So then I took that inspiration and for years did some fun World Music Dance Parties in the Twin Cities at that time.

SLM: So, while *Reggae Pon Yard* has a good variety, it's exclusive to Reggae. *Global Beat*, while it's music from "all over" has no fences to keep you in. There's a beauty in playlists on *Bad Axe Tap*, 'cuz you often make a really good two-hour mixtape out of a specific genres of tunes.

CD: It's really about playing what I'm feeling, what I'm listening to, what's happening in my life, my story. Like – *Global Beat* is my activism; *Reggae Pon Yard* is my first love; and *Bad Axe Tap* is my emotional outlet. It's like my musical diary of sorts.

SLM: I love that! So gosh, how do we even wrap this up? We could talk music & memories for days?!!

CD: Oh, stay tuned! DJ Kirsten and I hope to throw down. Kirsten's already dj'ing live but she's encouraging me come out of "Dance Party DJ retirement."

Yeah, I wanna blow the roof off this town. I've connected with some great DJ's from other places. And Mia at *Moonlighter Lab* is helping to find where we could fit into their line-up. Kirsten and I would be the opener dj's for these groups coming through. Yeah, it's in the development stages, but we're all excited!

SLM: Ooh, now I'M Excited about it! All right. Well, it's time to remind people of when they can hear your fantastic music shows: Every other Monday, 3pm to 5pm for the *Bad Axe Tap* show. And you share that slot with Charles Angell of the *Double Diamond*, right?

CD: Yeah, and he was actually the originator of the



Bad Axe Tap show and I took it over for him. We continue to turn each other onto good music! I stuck to his original format for a little while, but then took it into left field. What can I say, I'm a Cancer Sun sign with all the feels.

SLM: No matter your mood, I'd say it's a great emotional release for listeners, too – I love

those mixes. Then you play *Global Beat* every other Thursday, 7pm to 9pm, right?! I love how similar your names sound: "DJ Kirsten" and "DJ Chris Dunn."

CD: Yeah, we both bring it! It really is a completely diverse show. I couldn't ask for a better co-host. I love Kirsten with all my heart. I think I'm a nice complement to what she plays too, you know? We both came from urban areas, but not "different worlds," really. She just brings more of that "773" influence and I bring good flavors from the "612."

SLM: And how often do you play Reggae?

CD: I'm on the 3rd Saturday of the month on *Reggae Pond Yard* from 3pm to 5pm. The Reggae show here is one of the most solid Reggae shows on air, globally. Yeah, I mean we've got Smiley Sam and Fernando Sancho.

SLM: Is Fernando Sancho what Mark goes by? He drives in all the way from Winona, Minnesota for his rotation, correct?

CD: Yeah! We're doing a "Lee 'Scratch' Perry" special at the end of August. Old Lee Perry versus new – a combo show that Mark organized.

Yeah, but we've also got Micah Robinson, of course, of the legendary band *Burning Spear*. And he brings all of his silky-smooth awesome selections, and Reggae from within his world of live music. And Sam's really big into the Dub scene... I love all that stuff as well, but I needed to find my place again here. A lot of the stuff I had been playing in the past overlaps with what Sam tends to spin. So I love old Ska and I've been trying to stick to the Rockers era but also keep up with what's happening currently, which I don't hear much of in Viroqua. So I try to stay current and offer people what they're looking for by dipping into the really old classics and new rockers.

SLM: Well, big thanks to you for bringing such variety to WDRT listeners, and we'll hear you on the air soon!

WDRT WANT ADS & CLASSIFIEDS

WDRT music media must be sorted & catalogued in the in-house library. SEEKING: Volunteers with interest in music sorting; all genres & all media included. (3-5hrs./mo.)

WANTED: VOLUNTEERS TO HELP WITH CLEANING DUTIES @ WDRT (1X PER WEEK OR 1X PER MONTH; VACUUM, MOP, DUST, ETC.)

Please email volunteer@wdrt.org with your interest!

GARDENING PODCAST HOST requests your emailed gardening questions to offer on-air answers. EMAIL: gardening@wdrt.org

FOOD PODCAST HOST PURSUING GUESTS TO SHARE ENTHUSIASM/EDUCATION RE: ANYTHING FOOD RELATED! EMAIL TO SCHEDULE INTERVIEW: PHILOTHEAB2022@GMAIL.COM

Support Local Businesses that Support WDRT!

The following businesses provide ongoing financial support to WDRT through *Annual Underwriting*. Please stop in at these businesses - and do let them know you appreciate their continued support of your community radio station!

14 - 16 YEARS OF SUPPORT

Organic Valley
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Socially Responsible Retirement Strategies
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Oakwood Realty
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Join our list of business sponsors by contacting WDRT Business Sponsorship Coordinator Ann Altland at: underwriting@wdrt.org or calling: 608-638-9378 x4

STUDIO C UPDATE

Studio C is taking shape, and we're getting closer to the day when this new space starts making music, capturing performances, and creating new opportunities for our community.

What we're building is more than another studio. Studio C will bring together live performance, recording, broadcasting, and hands-on learning under one roof. A full band can perform for a broadcast, and the same room can function as a professional multi-track recording space. Musicians can record, experiment, and produce finished work, while volunteers and aspiring engineers will learn by using professional tools in a real studio environment.

Studio C will also make it much easier to bring live music to WDRT. Local bands and touring artists passing through the Driftless will have a professional, ready-to-use space for live performances. Designed for a "plug and play" experience, the studio will eliminate much of the reconfiguration currently required to accommodate larger ensembles. We envision producing intimate, professionally captured sessions in the spirit of *Live at KEXP* or *Tiny Desk Concerts*,

performances that can live on beyond the broadcast.

But the possibilities extend well beyond live broadcasts. Imagine a local band recording an album, a songwriter developing a demo, or community members turning a musical idea into a finished audio project.

Community radio has always been about democratizing access to the airwaves, giving ordinary people the opportunity to communicate, create, and be heard. Studio C extends that philosophy into music and audio production.

The project is now in late-stage planning and fundraising, with detailed acoustic, HVAC, and building-system designs underway. Many thanks to *Central Acoustics* of Minneapolis and *Beier Engineering* of Westby for their work on this endeavor!

We're still raising funds and gathering resources to complete the buildout. To contribute financially or to help with construction, contact WDRT at staff@wdrt.org or 608-638-9378 ext. 3.

legacy giving

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VIROQUA'S 14TH ANNUAL HARVEST PARADE SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 26

3pm Parade in
Downtown Viroqua

3:30 Ice Cream Social &
Dance Party at
Pleasant Ridge
Waldorf School



Learn more: viroquaharvest@gmail.com [@viroquaharvest](https://www.instagram.com/viroquaharvest)

PUPPET JAM

Community puppet building for the
Viroqua Harvest Parade

SAT & SUN, SEPT. 12-13, 12-4 PM

*At our Parade Studio, located around the backside of
WDRT on Main St.*

Help make puppets & masks
for this year's parade!

Wear clothes that can get
messy. ALL AGES welcome!

*Prefer getting crafty at home? Great!
Our only guidelines are: handmade,
people-powered, "harvest" themed & no
logos or politics. See our facebook page
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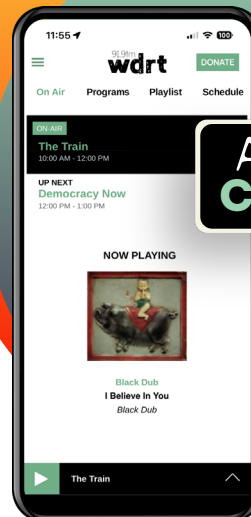


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