

# They're making a living in a male domain

Prime time princesses of air waves

In Delisi not only is music director at WDET-FM, the Detroit area's public radio station, she also does a Friday evening show, "New Releases in Review."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

## ANN DELISI - WDET

By Loraine McClish  
staff writer

**W**DET RADIO has been producer of the Montreux Detroit Jazz Festival broadcast for all of its 10 years. Ann Delisi refers to the 1989 event and her part in it as her "initiation festival."

It was another bit of on-the-job training for Delisi who started working in the station as a volunteer while she was a student at Wayne State University and just recently took the title of music director.

"I was a music student at Wayne

with no clear cut ideas of what I wanted to do," she said. "I never had a class in broadcasting or theater. I never wanted to be a performer — maybe a composer. All I knew for sure was that I loved music more than anything else and wanted to be around it, wanted to be a part of it."

"We're all music people here. Everyone of us who work here is a music lover."

What kind of music makes no difference.

"We're an eclectic station, a variety station," she said. "We give anything a chance. That's part of the freedom of Public Radio — a freedom no commercial station has. We get anywhere from 25 to 150 new releases a week and we've aired people no one else will air."

And, according to Delisi, WDET has been "good for newcomers."

"WE HELP THEM whenever we

can and we know we sell their records," she said. "It's been wonderful to hear some of the music that's come in from some of the African cultures. It's about time for that."

Delisi was born and raised in Detroit and still lives there. Her musical instrument is the piano, but there is not a lot of time for that. As music director, she oversees all the music programs on the air and has to be prepared to sit in as substitute for any host who isn't there for any reason.

She also has to prepare for her own Friday night shift and orchestrate all co-sponsorships of any manner WDET takes on.

She also spends a good part of her day listening to new releases and is active in the self-promotion that any public radio station must do. As a result, she is determined to start computerizing the music library.

"I still spend a lot of time in this room," she said of the music library. "Music librarian was my first full-

time job at the station. We've got 30,000 titles here and it is very safe to say that it's the largest record library in the city."

She took that job six years ago. She eased into assistant music director, then the music director position without worry about sex discrimination.

"The majority of the management positions here are held by women," she said. "I never felt discriminated against, but I am well aware that discrimination exists in the industry."

DELISI is a big advocate of live music.

"It was the live element that made radio radio and we should be preserving that element," she said. "We've got a state of the art sound stage here and we'll be getting more live acts to play in it."

Delisi has an audience of about 170,000 people she talks to 7-10 p.m. Friday nights at 101.9 on the FM dial.

"I love this job," she said. "I am grateful to be here everyday I walk through these doors."

## SHERI DONOVAN - WLLZ

By Loraine McClish  
staff writer

**S**HERI DONOVAN grew up in Farmington Hills and after a long circuitous route to find a career, is now back in that town working at WLLZ.

"I was a secretary, a waitress, a bartender (after graduation from Farmington High School)," she said. "One summer I mowed lawns for a landscaper just so I could get a tan. It took a while for me to realize it was going to have to zero in on something definite."

The something she zeroed in on was classes at Specs Howard School of Broadcast Arts where she got on-the-job, on-the-air training doing State Police news and some weather reports for AAA's Cycle Network.

"I got my first job while I was with the Cycle Network reporting to other radio stations, just talking to those people. That job was news director for a small market area in Traverse City because at the time that was what I thought I wanted to do," she said.

Her first job as a DJ was with WWCK in Flint, where she was able to choose the music she would play for her own air shift and where she decided she would stick with the music end of the broadcast business.

At WLLZ she turned from DJ to air personality.

"I see new music coming in every day," she said. "I read the trade magazines. I talk about the music and the artists that's the job. But I don't choose the music I play. Everything is so tied up with ratings we need someone else to direct our master plan here and keep us all on the same track."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Sheri Donovan went from doing State Police news and some weather reports for AAA's Cycle Network to a DJ at WWCK in Flint before becoming an on-air personality at WLLZ-FM.

myself in a proper way, but I have to think twice about it and worry about what people think. I have to be more than just another nice or pleasant voice on the radio. And that's a very good way to learn about me."

One of the requirements for her job, she said, is always having to be "up."

"This requires a lot of excitement on my part and sometimes it takes time to wind down," she said. "But I'm a night owl. I get to bed at about 4 a.m. A lot better for me than doing the morning news in Traverse City at 4 a.m."

A fun part of the job is the many parties she attends. She told about being invited to Aretha Franklin's

## ROBIN SULLIVAN - WMUZ

By Loraine McClish  
staff writer

**R**OBIN SULLIVAN got her job at WMUZ by answering an ad placed in what she called an "obscure publication" while she was working "in an obscure station" in Rhode Island.

At the time the station had a maximum of two hours of music programmed for the day and Sullivan was selling ads and cleaning the bathrooms in between her short stint on the air.

"WMUZ was looking for someone who was bright, plucky, energetic, fun, able to communicate one-on-one and able to communicate their love of God," the Farmington Hills resident said. "That was me. The ad was describing me."

She was the first woman DJ to be hired by an all-Christian station in Detroit.

She went into the job, "under a little bit of pressure from some of the hard-core conservatives but determined just to be me," she said.

"I knew I couldn't be all things to all people," she said. "I wasn't Miss Glamour and I wasn't Miss Intelligence, but I could do all things through Christ who strengthened me."

"I developed a following very early on and in many ways I'm like a big sister. They (the callers) ask for advice and I share Jesus. That's a lot more than sharing a recipe. There's no theater in this. I communicate one-on-one just being me."

Rhode Island to work in my Irish father's pizza place... humbled," she said. "I didn't know what I was going to do, except I wanted to tell others about Jesus — even if I had to wear a sandwich board to do it."

For Sullivan, getting a job at a little radio station with an audience of about 500 seemed to be a good start, especially "for somebody whose qualifications were a big mouth and a love of Jesus."

"Born again means fresh start," she said. "I found I had a purpose. I found there was more to life than I thought there was and I was able to convey all that enthusiasm."

"I still can do it. I'm on the air four hours a day, six days a week

and I never have a script. Never. I just share my life experiences."

ANOTHER THING Sullivan is sharing these days is her knowledge of theater.

She's directing two one act plays produced by Trinity House Theatre in Livonia. "An Evening of One Acts" is scheduled for weekends Oct. 20-Dec. 2.

Sullivan, who said she's not good at sitting still, is very active in "Operation Rescue" sometimes known as "Rescuers of the Unborn."

"I'm their cheerleader," she said. "I get the singing going and lead the prayers for the unborn and their mothers."



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Robin Sullivan of Farmington Hills has found her niche as an on-air personality, working a drive-time shift at WMUZ — 103.5 FM.

A GOOD PART of Donovan's job as an air personality is making public appearances and self-promotion.

"I'm always learning and every day I like my job better," she said. "I keep learning about myself because it's important to let myself come through. That's the difference between a DJ and an air personality."

"I have to be myself and express

YOU'LL FIND her show, "The Praise Company," at 103.5 on the FM dial 3-7 p.m. Monday through Friday and 2-6 p.m. Saturday. Call-ins come through on "The Praise Line."

Sullivan grew up in parochial schools in Rhode Island and studied theater in college where she "became a crazy woman," she said.

The wild life continued all the while she was riding herself of her New England accent, living in New York pursuing a career in theater and up until the time she accepted Jesus into her life.

That was about 12 years ago.

"I packed up and went back to