



Radio Ga Ga

- Claire Favry, October 2019

The Golden Age of Radio started in the 1920s, when families would gather for their favorite programs. But in Penn State University, a century later, the tradition is still going strong.

Nate Sharif is the president of the radio club, The Lion, and despite his busy schedule, he makes sure everyone can enjoy this space where every member can “carry a conversation and have an actual dialogue”.

But is it really possible to talk about anything? I was curious about whether there would be a certain censorship considering the academic setting, but Nate assured me that they could talk about any current topic or trend. Vaping, boxing, movies..., you name it.

There seems to be only one rule according to him: “You can’t use bad language!”

It isn’t always easy, however. Nate has to coordinate events for the club and more importantly, he is the person people go toward when leadership is needed. He explained to me that “if something goes wrong, you’re the person they think of”.

But the same isn’t always true when everything goes right. Yet, I could see that this was not what mattered to him the most. “Sometimes you get some recognition, but for me, it’s not a competition, it’s more about the awareness of the club. It’s a group and I guess you could call it a united front,” he said.



The club wants to offer the best content possible to its listeners. Radio in the US “is not old-fashioned but it’s definitely on its way out,” Nate said. Many people now only listen to it for news and music.

The days of epic radio dramas such as *The War of the Worlds* are far behind. Still, it seems that as long as there is an audience, the show will go on. “I don’t know if [radio] will ever be completely gone. There is still a strong audience and people still want to listen to it”.

But, as a communications student with his own blog, what in the world could have pushed him toward the radio? The answer Nate gave me was simple: he grew up with it.

Nate was born in the 80s, a time when the radio was already losing ground in terms of popularity. But while his older brothers had watched television growing up, with him, his parents wanted to try something new. “They put the TV in the closet and I wasn’t allowed to watch TV for the first ten years. It sounds weird but it forced me to utilize my imagination more and listen to the radio,” he said.

I could see Nate was actually grateful for this lifestyle. He emphasized how this TV-free childhood helped him develop his creativity and the ability to form his own thoughts. Radio “is more interesting because you can tell a story, you can imagine it; you’re not necessarily at the mercy of visuals.”

While he recognizes the benefits of visuals, he insists on the importance of being able to imagine a story in your mind and make it yours. And as an avid reader, I can’t help but agree with him.

Ultimately, the radio is a great way to express yourself and invite people into your universe. Nate summed it up better than me when he said: “With radio, you can create your own little world and people are interested in it and it can just take off. To me, there is no end to where it can go.”

