

Youth Lose Jammin 95.5

Hip-hop gives way to sports talk

BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN
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Young Portlanders were left wondering what would fill the void as the city's only mainstream hip-hop and R&B station, Jammin 95.5, becomes reformatted into sports talk radio by next week.

In a move that some insiders blamed on the economy, "The Game" will take the place of hip-hop music, the Playhouse morning show and everything else included in the city's largest beats station.

"It's very unfortunate," David Leiken, president and owner of Double Tee Promotions and the Roseland Theater, told the Portland Observer on Tuesday. "We're going to miss the station."

Leiken suspects that the local radio market is hurting because of a downturn in advertising. He said other middle-of-the-road formats, with its older audiences, can still attract the advertisers selling big ticket items like a Lexus.

"Youth-oriented (formats) are



The days are numbered for the Jammin' 95.5 Street Team, the youth-oriented ambassadors of radio promotions and local hip-hop concerts. The photo was captured from the Street Team's MySpace website.

bearing the brunt of the bad economy," he says. "Big advertisers cut these stations first.

Community music activists who worked on the station are losing an

avenue for support with the changes. DJ OG One, also known as David Jackson, just collected more than a ton of clothes for low-income families, thanks in part to

his role on Sunday evening's four-hour Jammin 95.5 "Underground" show.

"In terms of being able to get a weekly launch for up-and-coming

artists, for good things getting started in the community, it's going to hurt, but folks like me are going to be OK because we've been established through various other corporations and neighborhood centers," Jackson said.

Since its inception in 1999 by Rose City Radio, Jammin 95.5 has represented a type of balance to conservative talk-show holdings owned by Paul Allen, the former Microsoft billionaire who also owns the Portland Trail Blazers.

"It will affect our culture greatly because there are no other stations representing just rap and hip hop," said Portland hip-hop fan Bryan Dunning. "Jammin also does promotional and club events, and they are really involved in the diversity of our community."

The station declined to comment saying, "Due to the contract situation we can't say anything, but we will have an announcement Wednesday at 7 a.m. Thank you."

A member of the Jammin 95.5 Street Team who wished to remain anonymous confirmed the station's final days for the Portland Observer at the Cinco de Mayo festival downtown, saying, "everything will just be gone; we're not

continued ▼ *on page A6*

In the Neighborhood

How do you think that the elimination of Jammin 95.5 will affect Portland's diversity in music and cultural events?



It will probably be replaced by Z100 or another hip-hop channel.

--Brian Yoder



Jammin 95.5 is more important than another sports talk station.

--Laura Lydick



It's a problem because a lot of people listen to it.

--Robin Cousineau



It will affect music culture and club events because not many stations play hip-hop.

--Telena Rogers

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continued ▲ *from Front*

moving to a different frequency or anything.”

The revamped station already has a website called 955thegame.com that says, “On Monday, May 12 at 9 a.m., Portland will become one of the rare major U.S. markets to boast an all-sports station on the FM dial when Rose City Radio launches

95.5 The Game.”

Citing the 80 to 90 percent white demographics of his hip-hop shows, Leiken appreciated how the station served a large proportion of the young community, regardless of race.

“Jammin 95.5 had its shortcomings, (but) it’s a loss for a significant proportion of promotion for hip-hop concerts,” he says.

Double Tee was counting on Jammin to promote the June 3

Kanye West concert at the Rose Garden but will try to make it up through other local stations’ like Z100, scattered hip-hop shows and through cable television.

“With the loss, it’s really going to force local talent to work harder,” Jackson says. “It puts the pressure on artists to get out in the streets.”

Charity Prater and Michael Leighton of the Portland Observer also contributed to this story.