Reichel Turns Love for Music Into Career

by Edmund Frazer Myer

John Reichel, a 21 year old senior at Washington State University, and the assistant music director at KUGR Cougar College Radio, said he always had a passion for music and sound.

In addition to his position as music director, Reichel hosts a weekly radio show on Wednesdays.

Reichel is a member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, located in southwest Washington.

Reichel knew that he wanted to do something communication related early on. He said that he always liked to express himself; he even took acting classes and did the morning announcements for his high school.

Although he lived in Gig Harbor, he attended high school 30 minutes away in Bremerton. On the commute to and from school, he would listen to a lot of radio which, "put the seed in my brain that maybe radio is a good idea," Reichel said.

He came to WSU with a communication major in mind, but he wasn’t sure what branch. He decided to pursue a career in radio when he realized that it is an opportunity for him to combine the things he enjoys and his "natural knack for sound," in an actual job.

"I wanted to find a way to use the creative talents that I have in a valuable and meaningful way, and I saw radio as a way of doing that," said Reichel.

He started at KUGR the second semester of his freshman year. Currently, he is the host of "John's Jukebox Joyride," a rock show from 4-6 pm on Wednesdays. Anyone can listen to his show on KUGR.org, and on the free app "tune-in." To request songs, people can call the station, or contact Reichel through Facebook.

He enjoys all sorts of rock music, but he said the concept of his show is to explain to his listeners the important role that rock played in the world of music and the culture.

During his show, Reichel discusses topics that are historically relevant to rock-and-roll, such as when David Bowie died. He mentioned that he does have "creative freedom," so if there is something that he finds is important or poignant he will talk about it.

Reichel has been the assistant music director at KUGR since the beginning of the 2015-16 school year. He said he’s always been interested in the music library at KUGR, so he started to go to music committee meetings, where he realized that he liked the process of selecting, organizing, and inputting of music.

"Music is a really good way of bringing people together and finding common ground, finding ways to talk to people that you may never have gotten in contact with otherwise," said Reichel.

After three-and-a-half years of being affiliated with the KUGR, Reichel has learned about the diversity of music and developed a greater appreciation for the "radio forefathers" who had to do everything on the fly, such as change the disc after every song. Now with computer automation, radio hosts can just make a playlist and not have to worry about disc scratches or unpredictable interruptions.

Last summer, Reichel was a radio production intern for Spirit 105.3 FM in Seattle.

"I helped load commercials into the system, scheduled and edited listener testimonials, designed radio spots, and helped with other editing jobs around the station," Reichel said.

Reichel was also responsible for helping broadcast a live-feed from a music festival in Canada. For this job he was in the studio by himself. He said it was a huge responsibility and a little nerve-wracking, but it was the one of the biggest learning experiences for him.

"I will be able to carry these skills and know-how into the radio broadcasting field, being able to work efficiently and effectively will help tremendously when finding a career," Reichel said. "I owe a lot to Spirit for both helping me take a real step forward and showing me the working world of radio."

Currently, Reichel is looking for an internship for this summer. He wants to find one that will allow him to gain more experience and knowledge that will be useful for him after he graduates.

Reichel’s plan is to graduate next spring, and then get experience in the field. He said that grad school is a strong possibility, but he is anxious to start working in broadcasting.
‘WSU has taught me a ton, I am very eager to start implementing these skills in a professional setting,’ Reichel said.

After WSU, Reichel said he wants to work toward having his own show, where he can use his personality. He wants to build a team that can help him implement his ideas and work creatively.

Reichel doesn’t want to limit himself. He discussed the possibility of coming back and working in the Communications program at WSU, to help fellow Cougars in the world of broadcasting.

He explained that both WSU and his tribe have helped him to find out more about himself and what his passions are, as well as supporting him while a student at WSU.

“I would not be here without the help of my family and my tribe,” Reichel said. “I hope to show my appreciation through my work in broadcasting.”

He plans to find a way to repay anyone who has helped him reach his goals. So, regardless of what he does, he wants to ‘use whatever experience to, in any capacity, help both the Cowlitz Indian Tribe and WSU,’ Reichel said.

As for right now, Reichel said, ’I am excited for what the future holds after college. Go Cougs!’