

WPC radio show goes national

Comic book talk show is syndicated

BY ROBERT MOHL
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WAYNE — It travels across the night sky at the speed of light. Invisible to the eyes of mortals, its ethereal form shimmers, vibrating millions of times per second before diving into the radio receivers of comic fans across the country.

Look, up in the sky, it's a bird, it's a plane, it's the Fantastic Forum!

The Fantastic Forum, an hour-long talk show dedicated to comic books will return to the air 9 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 6.

"It's going to be 10 times more exciting than before," promises host Darren Dean, who has been on hiatus for several weeks as he prepares the show for national syndication.

The show, which began in July on WPSC, 88.7 FM, the radio station of William Paterson College will be airing on additional stations across the country.

"We anticipate between 15 and 20 stations are going to sign on," said Dean. "It's predominantly a college market, but there are a few 'real' stations on the list."

Fantastic Forum is not the first WPSC show to make the jump to syndication, said graduate assistant Richard Rossillo. He said in the past three years, Psychedelic Bonfire, an alternative music show, and In The Studio, a musician interview show, have also been marketed to other radio stations.

"We are expanding heavy duty," said Dean. "We want to make our mark on the industry and have people respect what we do.

"It will be in the fashion of a panel show, like Carson or Leno," Dean said. "If I have my way everything is going to be live."

In addition to the interviews, both taped, telephone and live, Dean intends to perform dramatic readings of comic books, give industry updates and have celebrity guests do comic book reviews.

The new show will open up with an interview with Marvel Comics founder Stan Lee, which Dean is hoping to conduct face to face in the studio of the Wayne college.

"It's pretty intimidating, being face to face with Stan Lee on our first show," said Dean.

Future shows will include a live broadcast from the Comics Fest convention in Philadelphia and interviews with Spider Man artist Todd McFarlane, science fiction author Harlan Ellison, and Adam West, star of the 1960's TV show, Batman.

Dean has been involved in the comics industry since he was robbed of his bus fare at a Manhattan comics convention at age 13. While waiting for a ride back home, he struck up a conversation with the convention organizers and began working full time for Creation Conventions, acting as a scheduler and gofer for guests. The experience allowed him to make a number of connections in the industry, which has greatly simplified his ability to book guests.

Dean, 27, of West Paterson, is a sophomore and a communications major at William Paterson College.

Assisting Dean is WPC senior and communications major, Bob Latta, 24, of Pequannock.

"I'm just a lackey," claims Latta. "I'm the engineer and sort of a co-host."

"If it wasn't for Bob the show wouldn't run nearly as well," protests Dean. "He is the Ed to my Johnny, the Beavis to my Butthead, the Quayle to my Bush."

Latta also provides a mellowing influence to Dean's often caustic style of interview and commentary.

"I have a tendency to rattle on when I shouldn't," admitted Dean. "For example, artist Rob Liefeld was nice enough to be on the show and I said he had no flair for backgrounds."

"We are going to be more user-friendly. We don't want to mess with anybody."