

INSIDE: The South Bay's Best Guide to Movies, Music

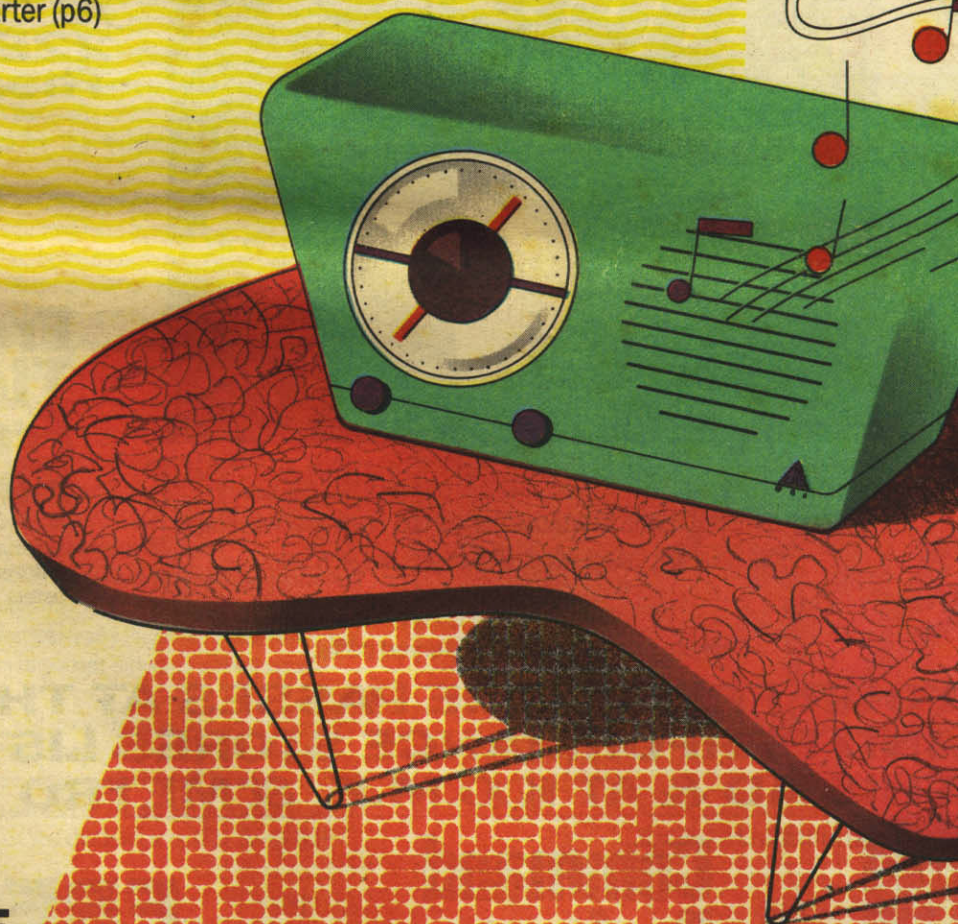
Metro

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RADIO

A TRIP AROUND THE DIAL

by Craig Carter (p6)



**FREE
MOVIE
TICKETS**
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After Midnight

Talk show host Leah Raim takes the calls in stride

"She looks just like my ex-wife," says the next guy up for the KOME's "Expressway Show." He points through the window at Leah Raim, producer and host of both the Bay Area's only live talk show on rock radio and the only alternative health TV show in Northern California—Gillcable's "New You Magazine." She reaches perhaps 40,000 listeners and viewers every week.

She looks like a diminutive wood nymph. White face with fading freckles, barely tamed red hair, white stockings and red dress. A faerie. So far she looks like the person who came to California to be part of the New Age scene and went on to become art director of San Jose's annual New Age Renaissance Faire, produce a couple of paranormal expos at Campbell's Old Mill, and give psychic readings.

Engineer-disk jockey, Brad Lee carts up a commercial as Raim steps out of the cramped news booth to fetch the promoter. Lee, a former teacher breaks for a moment from the phone patrol—he screens the calls in an often vain effort to stop the small-minded from shouting obscenities on the air—to answer a question.

"I like working with Leah," he says, "she's new. This is her fifth show, and she replaced a guy who was here for a long time. [The Expressway Show has been on the air for ten years.] So she's still finding her way." The phone lights up and he answers it.

The guy from Marin rambles and flounders and lasts ten minutes.

"That's why I hurried him off," Leah says. "I like to have three guests scheduled for occasions like that."

Next up are two counselors from the Bill Wilson Center, a home for runaway youths in the Santa Clara Valley.

"That guy really knows what he's doing," Brad says, indicating the black guy, who is fielding most of the calls, calls from runaways and kids who want to run away. His voice glides; he counsels. He goes into a rap about how the shelter treats all cases with the strictest confidence.

"Hello, you're on the air with Leah."

It's a ticked off young man. He says that, yeah, it's been my experience that the Bill Wilson Center isn't as confidential as we're being led to believe, because I told my counselor about an LSD experience and it got told to my parents. He leaves the accusation out there for 30,000 listeners to digest. He knows it has put two counselors and one host on the spot. What if a runaway

decides not to go to the Center because of his testimonial?

But the counselor's cool. He prods: was this at the Bill Wilson Center? Was it a special circumstance? What happened? What's happening with him now? The situation gets diffused, but finished without answers.

"I'm very sorry for your experience," Leah says, and adds, to wrap things up cleanly, "but I feel like it was a misunderstanding more than anything else."

After the show, in KOME's spanking new studios, Raim says, "I've got three aspects to my career," she says. "My basic training is as an artist. I exhibited my artwork for many years and came to this country six years ago. Got my broadcasting license, started off at KFJC [the avant garde college radio station], and knew in my heart that I would one day get a chance to get a legitimate talk show."

She got on the air at KFJC five months after coming to America, rose to become that station's first public affairs director, hosted four weekly call in talk shows for a year-and-a-half, and made enough contacts to land her won TV and radio talk shows in one of the largest broadcast markets in the state.

Jumping from college to Big Time Radio is a big big leap. And she did it quickly.

"—Are you kidding? It's not fast . . ."

"Well, there are people who go all their lives without getting anywhere, and you've got a show on the highest-rated rock radio station in the South Bay."

"You said it. You said it... But you know, I'm really good at what I do. I think I'm the best interviewer around, around this area... That's what you have to believe. I know I can interview anybody. But that's not the point. The point is I wanted to do it in a specific way. Which is what I'm doing. I managed to do what I wanted to do. But I did pay my dues. Like crazy."

"For a year and a quarter I volunteered at KFJC, that's a long time to do it for free, and I put a lot of work into developing it for free. I've been sponsoring the TV show with my own funding. Until now, when it's starting, just starting, to bring in potential capital. I went through all my savings to get to this point . . . This is it. This is the big time."

Later, on a stormy day in Mountain View, in the Stuft Pizza Bar & Grill near the suburbs where she lives, Raim, dressed in a yellow jumpsuit, asks, "Would you like to split a pizza? A small one?"

At the table, after Leah says she is a vegetarian who eats turkey and fish, a "California Pizza" is ordered. The tape player is off and the small talk begins. She's divorced, has a son who stays with her every other month, feels relationships are the most important

CHUCK SAWADELIS



KOME's Leah Raim

aspect of her life, doesn't think about work when she's not working—she can't even remember who her guests are for Sunday's show—just broke up with a guy yesterday, has a date tonight, says it's usually her who ends the affairs, and she's a Cancer.

"OK, you do a New Age show. What is a New Age person?"

"Every person on the planet is a 'New Age Person' on one level or another. A 'New Age Person' is somebody who wants to be in the '80s and wants to partake in all the things the '80s have to offer and contribute back in that same space."

"Is Ronald Reagan a new Age Person?"

"In a limited way, yeah... You see, the '80s is about individuals making individual choices. No longer is it relevant to be part of an occult. That's something I really feel strongly about."

"It sounds like the old American Dream."

"Well what's wrong with that?"

"Nothing."

"It's created the greatest country in the world."

Her manner has gone from person to professional to patriot. No matter the character, she'd rather chew on a concept than make a joke.

"My TV show is and always will be alternative concepts in a very middle class system."

"Is that possible? The middle class defines the mainstream."

"Right, but the mainstream is nothing but you and me. We are the mainstream. Do you realize that? So I know in my heart that the majority—which is what the mainstream means—want success, happiness and health. And interesting issues to wrap their minds around. That's what I'm trying to create in a half-hour TV format."

—Craig Carter

"New You Magazine" plays on Gillcable's channel 2B on Friday at 8:30pm and Saturdays at 5pm. "Expressway Show" airs Sunday nights from midnight til 2 on KOME-FM (98.5).