

Dave Dixon, Night Tripper

Harvey Ovshinsky

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Which local all night disc jockey wards off the most obscene phone calls, brings down the most listeners who get sick on STP, and plays stud to all the lonely night people who listen to his show with one hand on their Buddhist prayer candles and the other in their pants?

Dave Dixon does it all.

He is ABX's "Night Tripper" and his thing is done every day (except Tuesday) from 2:00 to 7:00 in the morning.

Dixon came to ABX about eight months ago and his non-disc jockey approach has gained him considerable popularity in Detroit's hip community.

When he did his first show (taking over for George Brown) some listeners thought they were hearing the engineer filling in for the new guy. He read through commercials like they were liner notes on a bad album and ignored a lot of requests to sneak in some good music. ABX was just getting itself together then and the staff consisted mainly of prog-rock-boss-jocks who still yelled into the microphone and gagged on ten year old jingles.

Before Dixon, listening to early ABX was a frustrating experience, sorting out the good music from the bad talk. It was like having to jack off with a Playboy even though you had a girlfriend, or trying to take a shower with your clothes on.

But Dixon's popularity climbed mainly because of his liberating attitude towards the radio business he was in. He never talks on the air except to entertain guests who pop up in the studio and his music is tied together nicely.

Judie Davis, (the *Fifth Estate* "Eat It" girl), The San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Living Theatre provided some of Dixon's finest moments on the radio. White Panther Minister of Information John Sinclair once spent six hours with Dixon, just rapping and playing all the Sun Ra music the turntables could take.

Dixon explains it this way: "I guess I learned from the hippies...doing one's own thing. Radio is my thing. It may not be in a few years but right now it's what I want to do."

During the Chicago police riot, Dixon went crazy. He played all the anti-war songs together, picked out some patriotic numbers and even talked to the audience a little. After the Tigers won the pennant and the city went crazy, he opened up the windows and for two and a half hours did his show with all the street noises backing him up. When he hears sirens he usually stops what he's doing, opens up the mike and plays it for the people, often making sly remarks about oinking.

"I try to keep myself from getting bored on the air. I listen to the show every night and I can't just play the same old shit. You have to mix it up, let the people decide."

Actually Dixon would have been on the air much sooner but ABX's then station manager John Small didn't respond to Dixon's letters and audition tapes were mysteriously lost in the mail. When Small went to WKNR, John Detz took over, hired Dixon and began putting the "progressive" back into his station's_ progressive rock.

Before working at ABX Dixon worked for Peter, Paul and Mary and co-authored three songs from their "1700" album. The most popular was "I Dig Rock and Roll Music" and a minor love-rock classic called "The Song is Love." Paul Stookey and Dixon went to school in Birmingham together and their friendship eventually led to Dixon directing Stookey's first film, "The Culvert."

“The Culvert” is very embarrassing to think about. It was my first film, and none of us really knew what we were doing. My cultural abilities were sharper than my producing abilities. I imagine my next change is underground television. All I have to do is find someone to let me do it.”

Underground radio is groovier and ABX is a better station for having hired Dixon to take over the decaying “Night Tripper” show, but his main contribution is his effect on his fellow disc-jockeys.

It’s doubtful that Terry King would have changed his name or even that some of the dope/sex/political songs would have gotten aired if the whole atmosphere hadn’t been liberated by Dixon’s experimentation and inventiveness.

Looking back to eight months ago, and comparing the radio situation then and now, listening to Dave Dixon is comparable to taking a shower with your clothes off.

With your girlfriend.

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/69-december-26-1968-january-8-1969/dave-dixon-night-tripper>
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