

Radio NY and Seattle's KEXP FM to Bring 'Music That Matters'

by Joe Pompeo



Washington State's Death Cab for Cutie

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On Monday, Radio New York -- the city's official radio station, 91.5 FM WNYE (otherwise known as the channel people switch to when there's nothing good on WNYC) -- and Seattle's listener-supported 90.3 FM KEXP, announced a new partnership by which KEXP's independent music programming will be broadcast daily in New York from 6 a.m. to noon starting March 24.

Through the partnership, KEXP will be able to reach an additional 14 million listeners, and WNYE, which is managed by NYC Media Group, will gain a window to Seattle's music community. NYC Media Group's popular indie music video show, New York Noise, which airs on NYC TV Channel 25, will benefit from being able to videotape more of KEXP's exclusive in-studio performance sessions -- a boon when CMJ time rolls around. (KEXP has been known to broadcast live from New York's Museum of Television and Radio.)

Cue sound byte: "Radio New York will bring a fresh new sound to New York radio and galvanize a community hungry for great content," said Matthew Tollin, CFO/GM of radio operations for NYC Media Group, in a statement. "Listeners will get the opportunity to fall in love with radio all over again."

The goal of the six-hour content sharing arrangement, dubbed Radio Liberation, is to "give greater voice to artists from the Northwest, New York and around the world," and "bring music that matters into the lives of more listeners than ever before," according to KEXP's executive director, Tom Mara. In addition to the morning programs, which will include a three-hour simulcast from host John Richards, a well known KEXP DJ, Radio Liberation will also bring to WNYE a nightly world music show and a weekly music variety show, and it will produce "hundreds of live performances" each year between the two stations, increasing access to both New York bands and touring artists.

Given the opportunity to add millions of new listeners, there doesn't seem to be a downside to the arrangement for KEXP. But over at the Web site Seattlest, commenters had mixed reactions, several suggesting that Mr. Richards, the DJ, was bent on living in New York, and that the station's musical content might become less Seattle-centric as a result.

"I wonder what benefit this has for Seattle listeners, if any? The way I see it, we're going to end up with a local station that is less local focused than it already is," one person wrote. "If John wants to move to NYC, go, leave us be."

Though the folks over at Gothamist, Seattlest's New York-based sister site, had not written about Radio Liberation as of this posting, The Culture Czar would wager a "Hell yes!" on their reaction to the news -- they seem mildly obsessed with KEXP.