

Everett's Henry J takes his radio show to the internet

BY IAN MCCABE
Special to The Herald

When Washington's stay-at-home order was announced, Henry Yarsinske Jr. made it a goal to revive "The Stereo Wire," a show he hosted on Everett's KSER-FM radio station for seven years.

He's no longer with KSER, so Yarsinske streams tunes 24/7 and then DJs live from 6 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday from his north Everett home. His first episode aired on March 24. Here, Yarsinske, 33, who goes by Henry J when he's on the air, talks about the return of his show.

How did you get into radio?

I was on KSER-FM for seven years, where I did "The Stereo Wire" between 2011 and 2017. I basically did that throughout college. My goal at the time was to roll my experience there and my communications degree from Washington State University-Everett into working for a radio station. I took the basic broadcasting class offered at KSER, and then when I graduated, the only available slots that were open for my show were overnight, so for the first four years I was on air from 12:30 to 2:30 a.m. on Wednesday. I grinded that out, and finally got a Friday night slot from 8 to 10 p.m. I also produced the Live in Everett podcast from 2017 to 2019. We did over 100 episodes.

What was the draw of working for radio?

I'd always wanted to do radio. I'd make tapes as a kid, making them sound like a fake radio show, and give them to my friends, and so it's always something I've wanted to do. Honestly, I just listened to a lot of radio growing up. My family always had the radio on. I



JAKE CAMPBELL

Henry Yarsinske Jr. — aka Henry J of "The Stereo Wire" show — DJs live at the Everett Food Truck Festival in 2019.

even used to listen to the oldies station here, KBSG-FM, which was really weird for a middle schooler to be listening to. I liked the idea, especially with sports play-by-play announcers, that it feels like it's in your home with you. It was a connection you had. You'd turn on the radio and listen to your favorite personality. I gravitated toward that; I wanted to be that to somebody.

What made you decide to start your own station?

I realized I didn't really want to do that for corporate radio, because obviously they tell you what to play, how to act and what to do, which I wasn't thrilled about. I've a few other jobs, too, which were all creative, but they've never been my own work. I wanted to do something that was my outlet, where nobody tells me what to do or play — it's a thing that I've created.

It might sound selfish,

but musicians have that. They have the final say, and that's what I wanted. I wanted to start up the show again, so I had a creative outlet that was solely me. Even my band (Oliver Elf Army) is collaborative and democratic, but "The Stereo Wire" is all on me. If it sucks one day, it's all my fault — and I like that. So now I'm doing it in front of a rickety old MacBook with a mic, instead of in a radio station.

Tell me more about "The Stereo Wire."

If you go to "The Stereo Wire" website and listen the show right now, it's just a massive playlist of music I like playing randomly, although I hope to eventually curate different blocks of programming. Say there's a punk rock hour at noon, or hip-hop at 5 p.m. I host Monday through Friday from 6 to 7 p.m., but I might hop in when the mood strikes me, play an hour

of soul music, and then go about my day.

I'm working on having guests on the show. For example, this week I'm going to interview a Seattle band called Actionesse. We're all going to hop onto Zoom, I'm going to record it. I have no idea what's going to happen, but that's the fun part of it. I hope to reach out to more local artists.

Why the focus on music?

The format of "The Stereo Wire" is something I came up with on my own because I love music. The name is from a band called Archers of Loaf, who I'm a big fan of. Around 2016 the Everett music scene exploded; there was a show every weekend. So I kind of latched on to what was happening here. I ended up getting more popular from that, having more bands come into the radio station.

"The Stereo Wire" is

always going to be part of me. It's how I ended up playing in a band and broke into music here. I've always tried to start a few things that didn't quite stick, so I see the show as a continuation of everything I was doing then.

What's it like being back on the air?

It's bittersweet. The full plan for all of this was for this to be a hobby when I had a job and was making good money. I started building the station last January, building my own equipment and thinking, "Let's see what the land of internet radio is like." I planned to gradually roll it out after the Fisherman's Village Music Festival in May. But then I lost my job due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the day I lost it, I just decided to start it up then and there. It's keeping me sane, and I'm enjoying it.

If you stream

DJ Henry Yarsinske Jr. — aka Henry J — streams tunes 24/7 on his internet radio station. He hosts "The Stereo Wire" from 6 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. Go to www.thestereowire.com for more information.

I hear you've gotten donations to keep the show running.

Without income, I had to ask for money to see if I could keep it afloat. So, I did two hours of radio, and thanks to donations from the community, now I have funding to sustain the station for four months, which is really cool, especially since it's all I can really do until we can go back outside. But if it all pans out, I'm hoping to start up a Patreon subscription where listeners can donate monthly.

But this is the power of radio: Thanks to them, I'm able to reach out and interact with my family and friends without being there with them. There's a community element to all of it.

What's next for Henry J and "The Stereo Wire?"

Priority No. 1 is getting a day job, but for the show, I'd love to have bands come into my home and do a set. And I'd love to do the show live from a bar or a coffee shop. Downtown Everett is filled with local businesses and is on the come-up right now, so I think it would be cool to highlight that. I think it would be great to stream live from somewhere and then spontaneously have someone there hop on the mic, and talk and hangout. I like that idea, so we'll see where it goes.