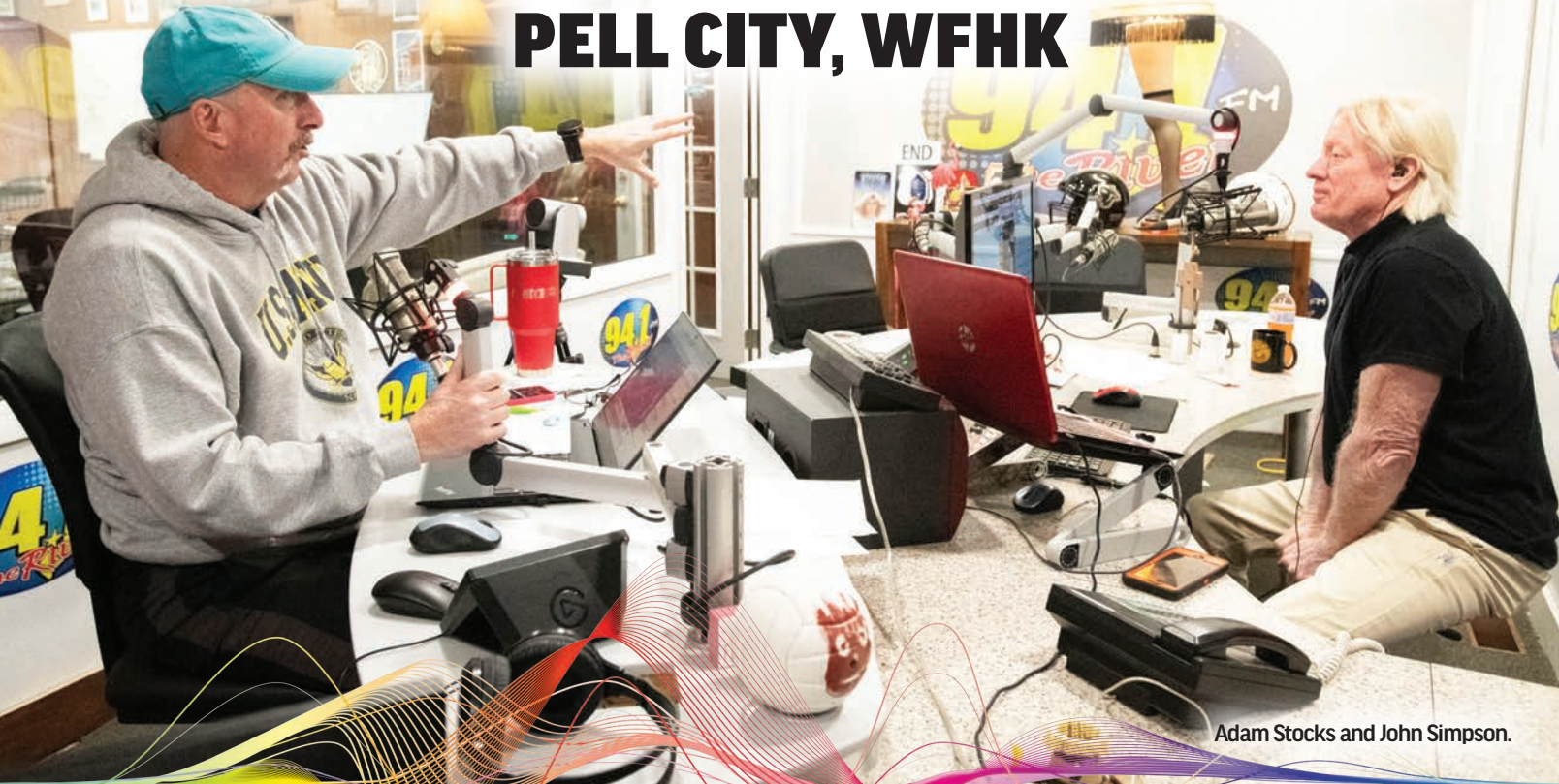


Baby, if you've ever wondered, Wondered where I am today,

# I'M LIVING ON THE AIR IN PELL CITY

## PELL CITY, WFHK



Adam Stocks and John Simpson.

Written by **LOYD MCINTOSH**  
Photographed by **TUCKER WEBB**

It's been 25 years since Pell City High School graduate, Navy veteran, and well-known Birmingham radio personality Adam Stocks bought WFHK, one of the last remnants from the staticky, crackly days of AM radio.

Since then, Stocks has transformed WFHK into a unique voice for Pell City, packing some of the old music and programming in mothballs and transitioning the station to FM, branching into video, and rebranding the station as The River 94.1, St. Clair County's only commercial FM station.

Additionally, he's half of the

longest-running morning show team in Alabama, The Morning Drive with co-host John Simpson. Not only do Stocks and Simpson have great chemistry – conversations swing wildly from pop culture and sports to education and politics – they set the tone for the station by focusing on local people and issues. The show often includes in-studio interviews with educators, business leaders, and politicians from around St. Clair County discussing local

topics, along with some cool music. Both are factors Stocks believes set The River apart from other radio stations.

"We're hyperlocal. That's the thing that I think really makes us successful," he says.

"You can turn on any radio station or television station and get the national info and even regional info," he continues, "but when you want to talk about redesigning the four-way stop in Springville or a traffic







tie-up on Highway 78 in Pell City, or whatever it might be, those are the things that people are able to get only from The River.”

WFHK AM 1430 went on the air in 1956, when fewer than 2,000 people called Pell City home. For 60 years,

very little changed at the station, broadcasting mostly country and gospel music throughout St. Clair County from a little brick building on U.S. Highway 78. Stocks, who had gained recognition as the producer and co-host of The Sonny & Wimp

Show (featuring former Auburn and Alabama basketball coaches Sonny Smith and Wimp Sanderson) purchased WFHK from former owner Doug Williamson in 2000.

Over time, he made changes to the station, such as canceling the



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“Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!” ~ Psalm 27:14





old call-in show Swap Shop, setting up internet streaming, and initiating video broadcasts of high school football via social media. However, the biggest change came in 2015 when WFHK went to FM and started playing a mix of rock, pop, and country, concentrating on songs from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, a format affectionately known as Stocks' Jukebox.

"I looked at my Spotify and my Apple Music and there are a lot of genres and I said, why can't we

have a radio station like that?" explains Stocks, previewing a list of upcoming songs on the playlist: in order, REO Speedwagon, Toby Keith, Europe, Elvis, Steve Winwood, and Aretha Franklin. The only criteria, he explains, is that any song played on The River must be a hit.

"It has to be a song that people recognize because we want to be able to sing along with it and reminisce of when we were driving that '70s Camaro and listening to CCR. That's what we did with

the radio station, and it has been extremely successful because there's not a whole lot of stations that have an eclectic music format like ours."

Additionally, The River has earned the Small Business of the Year Award from the Pell City Chamber of Commerce multiple times, including the most recent award for 2024, and has sponsored many important events over the years, including the annual Independence Day fireworks show.

Despite the changes in music,





format, frequency, and delivery method, one thing that hasn't changed is WFHK's focus on the local community. At a time when locally

owned and operated radio stations are going the way of the dodo bird – a trend Stocks calls “conglomerate radio” – The River has steadfastly maintained its independence.

“You get all these massive radio companies, and they buy up

all the local radio stations, and most of them own two, three, four, or five radio stations in every market, and it's just a cookie cutter,” says Stocks, a radio lifer with close to 30 years of experience behind the mic. “It's the same music format in each radio station, whether in Atlanta, Birmingham, Greenville, Jacksonville, Florida, or Dallas, Texas. It's the same company, and they use the cookie cutter and every radio station. That is not what we want to be by any means.”