

Television

USM's radio station 'ain't too proud to beg'

It's finally come to this.

Casting aside pride and pretentiousness, radio station WMPG-FM is begging for your money.

The 50-watt "alternative" station, operated by the University of Southern Maine, needs \$18,000 for a new transmitter and other equipment, according to WMPG Development Director Steve Hirshon.

If this week's "Begathon '86" is successful, the station will switch from mono to stereo and increase power to 1,000 watts by next fall. WMPG can now be heard at 90.1 MHz from 8 a.m. to midnight within a 20-mile radius of the antenna atop Bailey Hall at USM in Gorham.

Reception in Cape Elizabeth, the Higgins Beach area of Scarborough and points west of Gorham is now spotty. And until the recent relocation of WMGX's antenna from downtown Portland to the Presumpscot Street area, much of Portland's peninsula was deaf to the college station.

The "obsolete" tube transmitter WMPG uses "seems to have been pieced together by the people who founded the station" in 1972, Hirshon says. "Once we get new solid-state equipment, our goal is to get out a clear, consistent signal to Greater Portland."

WMPG programming is unlike most on the FM dial in Southern Maine. Some popular shows include "Saturday Morning Rag" from 8 a.m. to noon, featuring live interviews and music from Maine artists, along with book and art reviews; "The Cabinet of Dr. Fritz," an "exciting, weird, surreal mystery adventure series" featuring stories by Stephen King and the like at 9 p.m. Mondays, and "Las Comrades," a two-hour show from 4 to 6 p.m. Saturdays featuring Latin American music, culture and commentary.

There's a baseball talk show called "Talkin' Baseball" at 5:30 p.m. Friday with Hirshon and some of his softball buddies, and rock shows such as "Rock 'n' Roll Revenge" weeknights at 9 p.m. At 10 a.m. Saturdays through April 12, "The Maine That's Missing," originally broadcast on the Maine Public Broadcasting Network in 1981, will be part of "Saturday Morning Rag." The series looks at creative Mainers in depth.

Associated Press writer Don Kreis says WMPG is the best college station he's ever heard. "It's not just a bunch of college kids playing around like at most other college stations. It has programming you just can't hear anywhere else in Portland." Though he is currently on a six-week hiatus from broadcasting, Kreis does a weekly music show for WMPG under the name Nathan B. Stubblefield.

Sixty volunteer and work-study students operate the station along with three paid workers. The USM Board of Trustees holds the license and authorizes an annual budget of \$20,000. The studio is located at the USM Student Center in Gorham.

Jim Sanville

Look & Listen

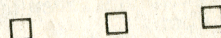


Hirshon says WMPG has already received several thousand dollars in contributions toward upgrading the station, including "antenna equipment" worth \$2,500 from Dielectric in Raymond.

Premium gifts for those who pledge money during the Begathon include T-shirts, albums and a whitewater rafting trip.

The \$18,000 fundraising goal "may seem high," says Hirshon. But that's less than MPBN Radio pays each year to broadcast one show, "A Prairie Home Companion," he points out. "For less than a year's worth of Garrison Keillor, greater Portland radio listeners can have their ears tickled by every musical style from Bill Monroe to Mutaburuka."

To contribute to "Begathon '86," call WMPG at 780-5415. Call before midnight.



TUNING TIPS: Even if you don't subscribe to SHOWTIME, you can hear the cable movie channel's premiere of "John Lennon Live in New York City" Friday night. The 1972 concert will be simulcast on WBLM-FM (107.5 MHz) from 8:45 to 10 p.m. The "live album" of the concert was released earlier this month. . . . The life of Jesus Christ and 2,000 years of Christianity are chronicled in a five-hour special beginning with an hour segment from 4 to 5 p.m. today on WMTW-TV. "Yeshua" (the Hebrew name for Christ), is the title of this historical documentary which will be broadcast through Easter Sunday on Channel 8. Other segments will be aired from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Sunday; 1 to 3 p.m. March 23 and 1 to 2 p.m. March 30. . . . "Exercite," a new family exercise program will premiere at 6 a.m. Saturday on WMTW-TV. The locally-produced one-hour show features aerobics instructor Diane Carpenter. Co-host will be Marie Fontaine, director of the Exercite children's program, which has been presented throughout the state. . . . A newly colorized version of Walt Disney's "The Absent Minded Professor" will be shown on The Disney Channel at 7 p.m. Saturday, with more play-dates later in the month. The 1961 comedy starring Fred MacMurray, Nancy Olson and Keenan Wynn is the first Disney film to utilize the computerized colorization process developed by Color Systems Technology of Hollywood.