



Urban radio remains one of the strongest forces to spread style, music, culture and ideas throughout the world.

For nearly 40 years 89.9 FM, KMOJ has stood as a powerful source in the state of Minnesota. Music director, on air personality, and programmer, Chris Styles, has become one of our most recognizable voices. I recently sat down to talk with him about the power of radio and what it can do to change how we think as people.

"My mission in all honesty is to bring balance to people's lives," said the 10-year radio veteran. "I'm fortunate enough to be heard by different ages, colors and creeds. We're all different but in many cases we're all the same." Urban radio provides another voice in the story of America that can redirect the attitudes of all citizens. Whether it is staying current with regional and international news, playing classic music or giving exposure to up and coming artists."

Though KMOJ maintains an urban adult contemporary format it is impossible to ignore the presence and need for hip-hop culture. Many argue down the impact of hip-hop simply dismissing it as a self-destructive cancer in urban communities. In discussing the influence Chris Styles stated, "I believe that two generations were programmed the wrong thing. There is science of how to program music for people but nine times out of 10 the people in those positions do not have love for the culture. They have a love for the money."

Chris Styles programs and hosts KMOJ's most popular program, Tite@Nite. Weeknights from 7 p.m. – 10 p.m. listeners can hear current day national hip-hop music, classic songs and

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Written by Toki Wright

up-and-coming hometown artists. The award-winning show is one of the few places you can actually hear songs directly made by people living in the inner cities of Minnesota in rotation with other music. Combined with open dialogue, the show is a hub for some of the rawest conversation in the region. This combination allows hip-hop the necessary platform to exist as a positive force.

Many fail to understand the great importance of showcasing Minnesota music.

"First and foremost the opportunity to be heard by 100,000 people at any given moment (is huge)," said Chris Styles. "(It's) Exposure for those that take it (making music) seriously and want to make a living, and in many cases servicing the community. When you think of community you shouldn't necessarily always think of your demographic. The Minnesota community is a reflection of the world – a big gumbo pot – Black, white, Asian, Hispanic, Somali and that's just the cultures. We have kids ages one all the way up to grandma that's 80."

The importance of maintaining balance remained at the core of our discussion. I had to question where we were out of balance, to which Chris Styles responded, "An individual goes through a day. They have their highs and their lows. They have their good moments and their bad moments. The music should be a reflection of that. We should have our happy moments, our sad moments, there must be balance. I, for one, can't sit here and only play club music. I'd lose my mind. I'm sure there are some individuals that can do that but as a community no."

Styles said when a community is programmed to hear only one thing, "They ultimately consume, conform and replicate. I've been able to host shows and witness the music the DJ was playing create energy to get people to fight. There are times where people have called me to play a song and they've cried. Imagine the impact that would have on a group of people over a lifetime."

Chris Styles also touched on the importance of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

"In order for us to truly know where we're going we have to know where we came from," said Styles. "For today it's always important to be relevant. Then you have tomorrow. You must allow people to prepare themselves to be aware of what is to come and in many cases expose them to something they weren't aware of, like music they haven't heard. In addition, you have to have your highs, mediums and lows – highs replicating energy, party, club, mediums under control and having a good time and vibing (and) lows when you quiet yourself down and slow yourself down a little bit."

The continuous contributions and countless hours spent creating balance will not go overlooked. Chris Styles remains one of the most important leaders in the development of Minnesota – a Minnesota that needs balance as it grows.

"I know there's a kid out there that wants to do what I do and he's paying very close attention to what I play, I say and what I do," said Styles. "They will apply those same things and carry it on."

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To be played on Tite@Nite Styles said music must be edited, it must be mastered properly, and in mp3 form. Artists should send submissions to titeatnitemusic@gmail.com .