

# INSIDE RADIO

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“Personalities INSIDE RADIO”

## Dreaming about better ratings?

by Mike Kinosian, Air Personality Editor

### **To Sleep – Perchance To Dream**

“Dreams surely are difficult, confusing, and not everything in them is brought to pass for mankind. Fleeting dreams have two gates: one is fashioned of horn and one of ivory. Those which pass through the one of sawn ivory are deceptive, bringing tidings which come to nought, but those which issue from the one of polished horn bring true results when a mortal sees them.” (Homer’s “Odyssey”)

Following a successful run on several Cox-owned ACs and Hot ACs, Cox Radio Syndication several months ago rolled out “The Dream Doctor Show.”

Santa Barbara claims bragging rights as birthplace for the unique, four-hour, nightly offering that features dream expert **Charles McPhee**.

It was in that Southern California community where McPhee conducted man-on-the-street interviews for a public access television program he hosted every two weeks about dream interpretations.

A caller to Hot AC KRUZ/Santa Barbara’s morning show said he had a funny dream and talked about it on the air. “[Another person] who watched the TV show called and said that person should [contact] me and ask what the dream meant,” McPhee recalls. “I [guested on] the morning show and was doing nights five months later.”

### **Sweet Dreams Of Syndication**

KRUZ’s nighttime ratings skyrocketed and McPhee believed national syndication was the show’s next logical step.

Several companies expressed interest, but as McPhee says, “We thought Cox was a great place to grow the show and that’s proven to be our experience. We’re delighted to be here. The show always evolves and changes; we have a good sense of community with our audience. We’re operating

with a similar [format] clock [as we used in Santa Barbara], but this one is much better.”

### **Early Start**

Not a real doctor, McPhee just plays one on radio. He does, however, possess impressive academic credentials, including an undergraduate degree from Princeton and a Masters from USC.

His early experiences were similar to that of a journalist covering a story. “I’d go to the library and read everything I could,” states McPhee, who got involved in studying dreams when he was only 19. “I’m fortunate because I haven’t [become] tired or bored yet. I’m always trying to figure out effective ways of bringing some of the excitement that I found as I’ve worked and learned in the field. Radio is certainly a whole new chapter for me in the last three years.”

At one time or another, an estimated 50% of us have “lucid dreams.” Those are dreams when you actually know you’re dreaming while you’re dreaming. “It’s a pretty remarkable experience and a skill that can be cultivated by keeping a dream journal and putting attention to it,” remarks McPhee, who is writing a soon-to-be published Random House book. “You’ve probably had a dream where something so crazy or frightening happened that - just before you woke up - you thought this can’t be real. That’s the introduction of consciousness into the dreamscape. But it gets better from there, because you can learn how to prolong it.”

### **Universal Language**

Listeners call McPhee each night from different parts of the country, but the language of dreams is universal. “That’s the charm of the show,” he states. “Dreams reflect problems that people deal with or good events they celebrate. Big events and milestones that happen in our waking lives show up in our dreams. The show maintains interest, because we deal with themes that are familiar to everyone.”

Dreams of the deceased, for example, are very normal. “The informative part [of the show] is to figure out why and what emotions that may not be fully conscious are being expressed by the dream.”

### **Fact Versus Fiction**

A widely-held misconception is that, if you die in your dream,

you actually die because your heart can't survive the stress. But as McPhee points out, "That's absolutely false - totally bogus. People die in their dreams all the time. It's a scary metaphor, but it's a common symbol in dreams."

Anxiety causes us to wake up just before reaching our untimely demise. "The dream is actually getting so powerful and vivid that it startles us out of sleep. You can't distinguish a dreaming brain from an 'awake' brain. It lets you know how much activity is going on in the brain when we dream. It's sort of a miracle. The body does a lot of things to keep us asleep during a dream."

Coming from a clinical background, McPhee's goal is to demystify dreams. "This show is much more about reality than fantasy. I try to bring some superstitious beliefs down to a more practical level so we can understand what's going on."

#### **No Letterman Top Ten List**

As I ask "The Dream Doctor" to compile a list of the most frequently asked dream topics, he rattles off the following, but stresses they don't appear in any particular order: tidal waves; fire; planes, trains and automobiles; death; ex-lovers; storms and tornadoes; babies; flying; teeth; infidelity; snakes; and being attacked.

Dreams of water and tidal waves, he explains, can signify large waves of emotion. "If you experience a lot of tidal wave dreams, it's an emotionally tumultuous period in your life. You feel overwhelmed and that you may not survive."

Sex, however, isn't a big topic on the nightly program. "It comes up, but I'm pleased that the show isn't shock radio," McPhee remarks. "Many radio and TV shows use that as a crutch, but we don't; I'm glad that we're succeeding without pandering."

#### **In The News**

Conversely, current events do play into the show and, as one would expect, McPhee fields many calls from those who've had loved ones in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the period immediately following 9-11, there were many calls regarding bombs exploding in dreams. "It might be a car bomb, or one in a building," he says. "We also had many dreams about people trying to reach family members. Those were the two big things about 9/11 - some sort of surprise attack and wondering [about the whereabouts of] your family. July 4th isn't a great time for many veterans, because it brings back many memories from firefights."

Each night, he talks with listeners who have recurring dreams that are especially frustrating or bothersome. The key point is to understand the dream, so you can take action in your waking life. "It's something in your waking life that hasn't been addressed."

#### **Differences Between Men & Women**

Men and women basically have the same types of dreams, but as McPhee notes, "Women have dreams that are biologically-specific to pregnancy and delivery. Dreams are emotional and leave you with an emotional hangover or curiosity. Women value their dreams more than men and talk about them more openly."

At the same time, however, men can dream that they're nurturing an injured child. "This can be their injured career or 'little baby business' that they're trying to get off the ground. We find metaphors similar across both sexes, but there are differences due to life events."

In a recently-conducted focus group among female listeners, McPhee points out, "They loved hearing about a woman's dreams, but were very excited to hear about a man's dreams. They wanted to know what the guys were thinking. This sort of eavesdropping goes on between the sexes."

Estimating that callers to his nightly program tend to be 65% women and 35% men, McPhee says demos for the "Dream Doctor Show" run the gamut. "I'm very pleased that we regularly get 10-year olds calling. Mothers are giving kids the cell phone in the car to talk about their dreams. We've created enough security for parents to trust us to handle calls about a dream with their child. Great-



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grandmothers, doctors and lawyers also call. We talk with every spectrum of society.”

**Unique Stories**

Questions about certain dreams are similar, but the story behind them is usually unique. “There’s always a puzzle to figure out and there’s a relatable story with it,” McPhee says. “My goal is to provide a lot of entertainment value and educational and informational value. That’s what we strive to give every caller. You’ll have fun when you listen but you’ll also have something you can take with you. You’ll be able to make better sense from your own dreams and perhaps make better decisions in relationships. My job is to pull out the unique background.”

**Affiliate-Friendly**

With the addition of KSTP-FM/Minneapolis, the “Dream Doctor” affiliate count now stands at 17. McPhee recently visited the Hubbard Broadcasting Hot AC to do a live morning show interview with Van & Cheryl. He also met with the KS 95 sales team and had dinner with the President/CEO of one of the show’s biggest local advertisers.

Another Hot AC – Infinity’s KIMN/Denver - is among stations running the show that bills itself as “Reality – Not Requests” in a File Transfer Protocol (“FTP”) format. Available for individual stations to download from Cox’s Internet server, the show can be compatible with any individual station’s music. “Everything – except the music - is available over the Internet,” explains McPhee.

Program Directors, he says, love the show. “What they really enjoy is that it creates a high level of brand identification with the station.”

**Keeping It Real**

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” (Eleanor Roosevelt)

Many have attempted to make dream interpretation somewhat mystical, but McPhee stresses “I’ve been careful to separate the show from astrology and horoscopes. What

we’re doing is very new and grounded in a clinical background and is much more compelling.”

It also runs at night, which – historically – had been an AC’s weakest daypart.

That, however, was before Jones Radio Networks’ Delilah came along several years ago. McPhee says he “absolutely” views the Love Songs host as a competitor, but likes his show because “We’re more reality-based and our listeners want help with reality.”



**WHO: Charles McPhee**  
**WHAT: “The Dream Doctor Show”**  
**WHERE: Cox Radio Syndication**  
**HOW MANY AFFILIATES: 17**  
**WHEN: Monday-Friday**

Calls/City	Format	Time
WFLC/Miami	AC	7pm-12midnight
WSB-FM/Atlanta	AC	7pm-12midnight
KLSY/Seattle	AC	10pm-2am
KSTP-FM/Minneapolis	Hot AC	9pm-12midnight
WWRM/Tampa	AC	12midnight-5am
KIMN/Denver	Hot AC	7-11pm
KBEE/Salt Lake City	AC	7-11pm
WSSS/Charlotte	80s	7-11pm
WYSF/Birmingham	AC	7-11pm
KRAV/Tulsa Hot	AC	8pm-12midnight
KCDU/Monterey	Hot AC	9pm-1am
WBEE/Baton Rouge	AC	7-11pm
WYLT/Fort Wayne, IN	Hot AC	9pm-1am
WKHI/Salisbury, MD	AC	7-11pm
WLRX/South Bend, IN	Hot AC	5-7pm & 11pm-1am
WYST/Bloomington, IL	AC	7-11pm
WRIK/Paducah, KY	AC	7-11pm

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