



MPBN's Sara Willis *In Tune Expands to Friday Night*



Experience caught up with Sara Willis, host of MPBN's *In Tune* radio shows, to talk about her love of music, creative process and what lies ahead for the show.

How did your radio career begin?

Oddly enough, it began when I was about ten years old. My parents bought me a little reel-to-reel tape machine for Christmas. It's funny – my mother doesn't even remember the gift or why they bought it for me, but it was the start of my life on the microphone! My friends and I spent hours doing interviews and singing, pretending we were the Beatles or some other music stars. I think I wore out the tape!

Did you always have an interest in music?

Yes. My father was a musician, and there was always music in the house. When I was little, Broadway musicals were a big thing...later, of course, it was rock and roll. I remember my older sister had some folk records like Peter, Paul and Mary, and they filtered in as well. When you're a child, it's all pouring into your brain.

We just wrapped up our Music that Moves ME testimonials. What piece of music has most influenced you?

Aside from that life-changing moment on the "Ed Sullivan Show" when the Beatles first appeared, it would be the day I brought home a single of "Like a Rolling Stone" and put it on the turntable. From that first drum beat and Al Kooper's swirling organ intro into Dylan's vocals, it was a seismic shift in my life that would influence everything I did. It's hard to describe what it felt like to hear something so powerful and amazing in this world of complete media saturation, but it was, as they say, "mind blowing." I played the record over and over all night long. To this day, I still get goose bumps and a wave of happiness whenever I play that song.

How do you plan each show?

I practice a kind of old school radio known as free-form radio. I start with a song and let the program unfold in real time, each song leading to the next for a reason – be it for sound, lyrics, musician or theme. I listen to each song carefully, hearing every nuance to understand what the songs are about both musically and lyrically and let my inspiration tell me what to play next. Depending on the length of the song playing, I have so many minutes to make the connection, more or less. There are times when I get the CD in the player and cued up seconds before I need to hit the play button! While it can seem a little seat-of-the-pants, 50 years of being a music fan has stored up plenty of old songs in my musical memory and has given me a solid base. I could go on and on about this process. It's very rare in radio these days to have someone in a studio putting together shows the way I do. I often think about it like being a chef or a painter – the songs are the raw ingredients or the paint, and every show is a dinner or a painting. The process is never repeated exactly the same.

What's ahead for your show?

Jazz is going to be alive and well on Sunday nights with the fabulous Rich Tozier, but ***In Tune*** will also have a Friday night show from 8:00-11:00 to complement ***In Tune Weeknights*** and ***Sunday Morning***. Friday night will be a fun night of music, new and old – from Dylan and the '60s to the newest releases – all spun together by yours truly, hoping to find the ears and hearts of MPBN listeners.

*Be sure to catch Sara Willis on ***In Tune Friday Night***, beginning July 5, for a program of contemporary singer-songwriters, folk, blues, acoustic rock, jazz, alt country, world music and some great new selections from artists you'll only hear on MPBN! ■*