
*“Like
baking soda... I’m
multipurpose.”*



MPBN’s Jennifer Mitchell *Music Producer and Radio News Reporter*

For this month’s *Behind the Mic*, we caught up with the multifaceted Jennifer Mitchell, operations/music producer and radio news reporter at MPBN. Thanks for taking the time to chat with us, Jennifer!

What triggered your interest in radio?

I really don’t know. I guess the signs were there. I was that irritating student who always volunteered to read aloud to the rest of the class. I also tried my hand at “hard-hitting” journalism in fourth grade by writing an article for the paper about how the town water tower really needed to have a lid because pigeons were roosting on the side, face out. Also, my parents listened exclusively to public radio, so I grew up with **All Things Considered**, **The Thistle and Shamrock**, and of course, classical music. I loved to play around with the tape recorder – I’d erase bits of one tape, record my voice over the erased bit, and try to splice mix tapes together with Scotch tape. I think I just like doing stuff like that. Lucky for me there’s a career called “radio.” Otherwise, I’d never have left the basement.

You have an exceptional radio voice, anyone ever say “y’know, you should be on radio!”?

Well thanks...no, no one has ever actually said that. When I was in fourth grade playing around with that old tape recorder, I sounded like Linus from Peanuts. Hopefully those days are over...

How did you arrive at MPBN?

I spent most of my school years in Maine, so I was already familiar with MPBN, but I didn’t really think about coming back to the state until about 2003. I had been working at Peninsula Public Radio in Alaska as news director for several years – that was a great experience, but I wanted a change of climate. So, I packed up the dog and a few items and drove the ALCAN Highway to Louisiana – minus a few bits of the car, like the muffler, which left me somewhere in Alberta, I think. My family is from Louisiana, so it was a logical place to regroup. I stuffed myself with crawfish, soaked up the sunshine, and worked in newspapers for a bit until the ideal position came around at MPBN about nine months later. Then I drove up here, back to snow and spruce trees.

Early on, did you get nervous when you were on the air?

Not really, no. See, I’m really not afraid of making a fool of myself. I got over the fear of sounding dumb ages ago – mostly by saying dumb things. I remember turning on the mic and talking with this uber-low, **Hearts of Space** type delivery, and then listening to the air check tape and thinking, “Wow. That sounds daft.” It’s much better to be yourself on air, even if your voice isn’t perfect.

You cover a lot of ground on MPBN’s airwaves. How would you describe your role at MPBN?

Like baking soda... I’m multipurpose. I have experience in print journalism, several different kinds of music, long form radio editing, casting, voice overs, hosting, TV fundraising, and news production, each of which is a slightly different skill set. I embrace change and variety.

What issues and challenges in Maine today are you most concerned about?

Agriculture issues hold special interest for me. I think the ‘80s have much to answer for. Food marketing was all about fat-free, pre-packaged, and touted as better than the real thing, and it’s changed how my generation eats, how we farm, how animals are regarded in our society, and what we expect to pay for food. I’m interested in following this perceived shift back to local foods, and I’m curious to know if it will last or not.

MPBN offers a wide variety of programming and listening options – what appeals most to you?

I’m a big fan of **This American Life**. It just hits all the right notes with me. I want to know the rest of the story – the bits of our culture that perhaps didn’t make the 7:01 headlines. I also really enjoy **Snap Judgment**, **Wait Wait Don’t Tell Me**, **Marketplace**, and BBC coverage in the mornings.

Late night and long drive... what are you listening to?

I suppose you want the truth. I’m probably listening to Scandinavian death metal, especially if I’ve had too many energy drinks. If I’m in a spooky, autumnal mood, then I’m probably listening to Goth rock. When I’m feeling calm and balanced, then I like losing myself with the late 19th and early 20th century composers like Debussy, Faure, Ravel, Salzedo, Butterworth, and Vaughan Williams. But sometimes I just want to feel connected to the rest of the planet, and on those nights, I plug into MPBN.

Thanks Jennifer! We believe that behind your great radio presence, there’s a stand-up comic in there as well. Here’s to hoping you remain in radio, and with MPBN! ■