



The Other Word

Is liberalism dead? While it may be hard living in a blue state in President Bush's red state America, where conservative commentators like Rush Limbaugh dominate the radio airwaves there's some solace: Air America. While the year-old progressive network lacked a Los Angeles outlet since just after it went on the air, Angelenos can now get their daily dose of Al Franken, Janeane Garofalo, and Randi Rhodes on KTLK, AM 1150. In addition, the station offers up *Harrison on the Edge*, a locally based show with radio personality Harrison.

"My show is on Saturdays from 7-10 p.m. I'm gay, but it's not a gay show. I'm open about it. In fact, I'm the openly gay son of a neo-Nazi—which is the truth," says the outspoken Harrison. "What I finally get to do is have an avenue in which progressive ideology is not only welcome, but it gets to be interactive. I don't have to go on a gay channel and do it that way, I just get to be a human being who happens to have a little Disney magic without the Disney and talk to everybody, because this is our sandbox of fun."

In addition to Harrison, the show has a number of regular features, including *iN*'s own Bethany Marshall. "We have the fabulous, exquisite, and sexy Bethany Marshall. She's wonderful because she's comfortable being extremely frank about the human psyche. She doesn't self-edit when she and I talk about the pathology of human thinking—whether it's gay, straight, or otherwise, so we actually get real information. She puts it out there, and it's terrific stuff—it makes for good radio, too," boasts Harrison. "We're also having a lot of A-list celebrities. I've interviewed

L.A.'s KTLK radio is the home of Air America and now Harrison on the Edge on Saturdays

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everyone from Rosie O'Donnell to Tom Hanks to Carol Channing. All these people want to come on the radio and on this show specifically. We're going to really have a Mr. Toad's Wild Ride on the radio, but smart. This is intelligent content, driven by access to the movers and shakers of our times."

Harrison believes there's a hunger for progressive talk, especially with the right wing's dominance of the airwaves. "Air America is approaching 60 stations nationwide at this point. Clear Channel, which has traditionally been a very conservative radio chain, now appreciates that progressive talk can make money and that it absolutely draws listeners. We know from the recent elections that some 48 million people are not great fans of the Chimp in Chief," says Harrison. "Liberalism never was dead, but the word liberal is probably kind of dead, because to my ears, it sounds kind of icky now. I've been trained since the Reagan years that liberal means a weak, soft, lazy, cowardly, spineless, gelatinous moron. If you take a term and redefine it into a negative, you can therefore disenfranchise the group that used to go under that title and turn them into the enemy and it works. The word now is 'progressive.' KTLK is taking a big risk, but they're also businessmen, programmers, and storytellers. They see that it's important to tell these stories and they know that in market number two—huge L.A.—they're already kicking ass, and there's a lot more ass to kick. It's fun to be on the winning side, isn't it? Especially when you believe you're part of the solution, rather than perpetuating the problem."