In 1996, commercial radio underwent a quiet revolution. Local station owners everywhere sold their stations as fast as they could to conglomerate groups. Massive consolidation was occurring in the wake of the “Telecom Act”. The new corporate owners gutted the staffs.

DJs have a gift of listening to the best of their communities and then presenting that back to them. When live local voices are replaced with prerecorded and satellite programs, it ends an age-old symbiotic relationship between radio and the community. 

Corporate FM is about what happens when a city loses a communal microphone. Radio’s broad coverage gives it the ability to unify huge populations. Unlike Facebook, Satellite radio, or web-based music sharing applications, locally-owned terrestrial radio can reach thousands of people across all incomes and ages in a local region at the same time with a message that is relevant to them at that moment. However, there is little reason to choose to listen to radio over other forms of media if it does not introduce you to interesting parts of your own community. 

DJs once played local bands in regular rotation, they shared the roles of charities in their lives with us. They helped small
businesses grow. Our local infrastructure used to depend heavily on radio, but now there is a communication void in our cities.

The medium of radio becomes threatened when there are only 2 stations worth listening to.

By investigating how the financial system gutted commercial radio instead of growing it, documentary film-makers Kevin McKinney & Jill McKeever reveal a new way that could revitalize the medium and rejuvenate the communities that radio is there to serve.

**CORPORATE FM**
Director’s Statement

In 1998 KLZR, the FM rock station in my home town of Lawrence Kansas, was voted by Rolling Stone Magazine to be in the "Top 10 Stations that Don’t Suck". Within a year the station was sold and the format was changed to sound like every other station on the dial. A radio staff was fired or quit in disgust. As a listener, I also felt like the station had fired me too. This scene was happening everywhere in the US at the same time. The congress had just made massive radio consolidation legal through the Telecommunications act of 1996.

Why is Jewel holding a number five? She was among five local musicians who were played in regular rotation on San Diego's 91X. These were artists that were mostly unknown before they were given air-play (Jewel was homeless at the time). Radio built a critical-mass locally behind these acts that launched some of them to grace the rest of the nation. A local music director mixed local music in with national favorites that were picked from the gut of the programmer. Radio stations were once adored by their communities for this. A local DJ could raise awareness for a local charity, a civic concern or a band all within the same show. The loss is not just music and culture. Today there no longer any unsigned local bands played in rotation on corporate radio. Those bands are played now only once a week, usually during a local music show late on a Sunday night. Local charities are not given the same breath. Outside of zany morning shows, DJs speech is restricted to 15 seconds at at time including station ID
and any station endorsements. The corporate playlist of music and commercials has pushed out any room for spontaneity.

**Follow the money**

It took seven years to make this film. One thing that kept me going was that I wanted to figure out how stations could make money if they kept firing the listeners? Stations were selling at outrageous prices while audiences were being rebuffed at every turn. The math did not add up. The search took me many places with a variety of culprits to explore. Each one of them would shift the blame to another party for the failings of radio. There were no satisfying explanations till I heard Josh Kosman on NPR's show "Fresh Air with Terry Gross". He was explaining how a "leveraged buyout" (LBO) can kill a company or render an entire business into a shell of what it once was. I ordered his book that same day and took a plane to meet him within 2 months.

We created a video DVD extra that explains the LBO deal in more detail (see link below). I personally believe that the maneuver should be made illegal because it drains businesses of operating capital in favor of high debt loads. Such a plan forces the firing of employees and hurts future research and development. In the case of radio, the skyrocketing station prices created by investors who had no skin in the game ruined the entire market for buying stations. Who can run a business responsibly, when the cost for entry is more than you will ever make with that business?

Hyperlink to DVD extra: http://www.fmfilm.com/what-is-private-equity/

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**CORPORATE FM**

**Bios**

**Kevin McKinney** (director/producer/editor/camera) McKinney's feature documentary work includes camera and sound on "Body of War" directed by Phil Donahue and Ellen Spiro. McKinney helps other filmmakers as a director of photography, gaffer and location sound recordist. He has a passion for taking complex subjects and finding the whimsical truth in them. McKinney uses his skills with the camera to animate concepts that may have seemed obscured beforehand. He is a winner or the Aspiring Filmmakers’s Award for his previous film Planet Trash. Born in Wiesbaden Germany, he graduated from the University of Kansas with a double major in Sociology and Theatre/Film. He believes that the sociological impact of radio for local community support is more powerful than the internet or any other technology. That is part of what led him to make this film.

**Jill McKeever** (producer/editor) is a cross-disciplinary artist living in Kansas City, MO. With a background in music, dance, graphic design, web, video editing, and sound design, she is drawn to a large variety of work. In addition to shooting, editing, and producing Corporate.FM for the last 4 years with Kevin, she is a botanical perfumer and owner of 'For Strange Women' perfume. Additional projects range from her iphone app "Cat Translator" to experimental audio and music recordings. Jill's love for music and desire to support the bands that act as a deeply uniting force drew her to Kevin's message in "Corporate.FM".
Jeff Peak (director of photography) Jeff is an independent cinematographer, director and producer. His past work includes the independent feature documentary Kansas vs Darwin, which he shot and co-produced, and the independent feature Play On. His films have been seen in festivals from Wichita to Wales. The interest in documentaries stems from his start at a PBS affiliate where he began his career as an editor and shooter, and a brief stint as a news cameraman and editor on the island of Grenada, W.I. Jeff has been recognized with accolades that include multiple Emmy awards, festival audience awards and various corporate filmmaking plaques, trophies, and drink coasters. Jeff resides with his wife and two children, in Kansas City, Missouri.

CAST

Danny Cox (Narrator) recorded his first album "Live at 7 Cities" at the 7 Cities Tavern in Cincinnati Ohio in 1963. AM radio station WCKY played this album giving him a regular following. Danny says that it "jump-started his career". From a young age Danny has cared deeply about civil rights and his community. He marched (and was arrested) as an 8th grader so that African-Americans would have the right to go to the same swimming pool as everyone else. This passion stayed with him and touches his work as a songwriter and music educator today. He has written lyrics and music for several plays from the African-American perspective including "Fair Ball" about the Kansas City Monarchs and "Black Cowboy Sings". He has released 8 records since his early recordings at the 7 Cities. He has played Carnegie Hall. Today he is very active teaching children about folk music and their place and responsibility in the legacy of civil rights.

Michael Halloran has an ear for potential and has used that ear to discover and prosper the local musicians wherever he has lived. In San Diego he introduced the city to its own emerging talent. Those bands, including Blink 182, Jewel, Jason Mraz, and Anya Marina went on to become part of the larger American culture. It used to be that bands were able to reach new levels in their careers because someone at their local radio station cared enough to play them when they were unknown and without contracts. These musicians quickly went from gigs at bars to arenas. Mike was educated in England where he was heavily influenced by the legendary DJ John Peel. Today he is working on a local TV show called "SD Music Scene".

Jewel was living in her van on the streets of San Diego when 91x first started playing a bootleg recording of her over the airwaves in a steady rotation. Because of this, she became a household name in that city long before she was known to the rest of the country. Her folksy unplugged style was a departure for what rock radio traditionally had played. Her first album sold 12 million copies and she graced the cover of Newsweek with the byline: “Macho music is out…”. She had helped herald in a new popular music movement exemplified by “Lilith Fair”. Today as a proud mother she has recorded an album of lullabies. Jewel can also be seen touring with her latest music and showering attention onto her devoted fans that follow her online.
Tom Bunch has worked as a concert promoter, talent buyer, venue owner, event producer, band manager and consultant. In these roles has worked with Toadies, Butthole Surfers, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nirvana, NIN. Pearl Jam, Jane's Addiction, Public Enemy, George Clinton, Johnny Depp, Beastie Boys, Black Flag, Dead Kennedys and many other well-known acts. He witnessed first-hand the consolidation of the once diverse and competitive concert promoting, record label and radio business'. He maintains that new popular music movements have not germinated since the music business started operating by numbers instead of love for music. He is however doing his part to promote new sounds. Today he represents Makana, the Hawaiian Slack guitarist whose song "We Are the Many" <http://makanamusic.com/albums/albums-by-makana/we-are-the-many/> has become an anthem for the "Occupy" movement.

Josh Kosman is a former editor at Mergermarket.com and a former senior writer for The Deal and Buyouts Newsletter. He discovered while covering the finance industry that the Buyout barons from the 1980s were still around under a new name: "Private Equity". He says the public needed to know that many companies were being mortgaged and it was the public that was paying the price through loss of jobs and tax revenue. Over 10 years he developed the concept of “The Buyout of America”, a book aimed at a general audience. Penguin's Portfolio division published the expose in 2009. Hyperlink: http://buyoutofamerica.com

Jeanne Ashley began her radio career while still in High School, on the Armed Forces "Far East Network". Since 1989, she has worked continually at stations in Hampton VA, Utica NY, Syracuse, NY, and Kansas City, MO. Jeanne is currently the evening personality at 101.5 LITE FM (WLYF) in Miami Florida. "My hope for this industry is a widespread return to true live and local radio. I can dream, can't I?"

Jeff Peterson's work at KLZR "the Lazer" put Lawrence, Kansas on the map as a music destination. Emerging bands from across the US were often shocked when Lawrence crowds would sing along to songs that were not widely known anywhere else. Jeff's regular rotation of local bands alongside popular new bands on his show helped push the local bands into bigger venues. Jeff adds: "The love of music inspired me to get into radio, and in turn radio fueled my passion for music."

Herndon Hasty is the former senior VP and market manager at CBS radio. He is also the former general manager of the legendary KY102. Herndon oversaw outrageous station promotions that made his stations well known amongst his listenerhip. He then used his massive audience to bring in advertisers and support local bands and charities. He is a great supporter of his staffs. However, since consolidation, he has had to fire many of them.

Rose Diehl (KMAJ) worked at the same radio station in Topeka, KS for over 28 years. Even though she was cut by the new owners, (Cumulus) she said she still felt incredibly blessed to have been able to build a lasting relationship with her listeners. Her audience recognized her voice as they would a family member. Rose's hope is to one day again work for a mom & pop-owned radio station that is involved in the community. She says, "You can not serve the public if you are just voice-tracked and not there...You gotta have
somebody there in the studio to answer the phone. That's the connection...and now with all the social media, that's important [too] but you've got to be in the studio to interact."

**Slacker** is a "radio personality". A gifted entertainer, he engages and motivates listeners to support his station and community. At KY102 he had the funding and managerial support that he needed to motivate the community to unite, including city-wide parades and week-long parties leading up to concerts. He was also able to share his life with his listeners more openly before DJs became restricted to 15 second soundbites. His likable persona and honesty helped the city get to know itself and grow.

**Sean Passmore aka "Chuck Taylor"** was the local music director and night DJ at KLZR. Neither of those titles exist anymore. The night DJ spot is where emerging DJs honed their talent before they became great daytime music curators. The elimination of that night shift position is a key factor contributing to the death of commercial radio, as there is no training ground for the next generation. Sean left radio as so many rising stars have because their shifts are now "voice tracked" by the few remaining staff. Their potential to be influential players in the community and music scene no longer exists.

**Jeriney Fulcher** is a young dedicated DJ at a corporate radio rock station. In addition to her job with a morning show, she comes into the studio on Sunday nights when no one else is around to volunteer host the only local rock music show in Kansas City. This Sunday night show is a rare outlet for local musicians to be heard on air. Jeriney is living proof that there are still DJs that care about new music and a local scene.

**David Lawrence** worked at WDAF in Kansas City from 1973-2008. His country music audience included everyone from children to grandmas. After consolidation, he says that radio abandoned the "over-60 crowd" as the "country community" was redefined as 25-54 males. He loved the broad catalog of country music that he was free to play before consolidation. The DJs never felt burned out on the music when they were "running the table," he says. David was a co-host of Children's Miracle Network telethon as well as the Easter-Seal telethon on a local TV station. David hosted remote broadcasts to mobilize and unite listeners, and he and his wife Deanna personally started the "Turkey Day Radiothon" for the Salvation Army. Unfortunately his ability to use broadcasting for charity support diminished when restrictions were placed on how much he was allowed talk on-air. Like many others, he left radio because it was no longer a positive work environment.

**Erich "Mancow" Muller** is a syndicated radio personality. His show, "The Mancow Radio Experience", based in Chicago plays in fifty markets. Syndicated shows have thrived amidst radio consolidation. Even so, he still does not believe that consolidation was a good thing for radio. "We've ruined all the spawning grounds [for new radio talent]. Where are these guys going to start? They're going to start on small radio stations. Those have all been bought by the corporations and now it's all computer recorded voices". He adds that "Consolidation is ruining radio because when you own everything there is no incentive to be the best".
Hank Booth is the former owner of KLWN and KLZR. His morning show "According to the Record" on the AM dial focuses exclusively on his home town of Lawrence Kansas. Like so many local owners, Hank takes an active role in serving the community. Because of this, he is well-known and his stations have been popular with listeners. He often quotes his father Arden Booth as saying "The one reason we exist, is to serve the people in our immediate listening area".

Steve Wilson, From journalist to disc jockey, from retail record guy to rocker, Wilson is preoccupied with music. His diverse background makes him a knowledgeable resource on the subject of popular music and the industry that serves and destroys it.

CORPORATE FM
Production Credits

Directed by Kevin McKinney
Produced by Jill McKeever & Kevin McKinney
Edited by Jill McKeever & Kevin McKinney
Executive Producer: Melvin Broek
Narrator: Danny Cox
Featuring: Slacker, Jewel, Lew Dickey, Jeanne Ashley, Big N Rich, Jon Mandel, John McGrath, Josh Kosman, Steve Wilson, Pat Powers (DVD extra), David Lawrence, Brian Adams, Tom Bunch, Michael Halloran, Jon Harrison, Herndon Hasty, Eric Boehlert, John Harper, Mancow Muller, Dick Fatherley, Justin Bale, Rose Diehl, Kyle Akers, Ryan Whitehouse, Bo McCall, Jeriney Fulcher, Joel Hornbostel, Stan Henry (DVD extra) Sean Passmore, Hank Booth, Jeff Petterson, Sue Wilson, James Christos, Chuck Haddix, Vickie Walker, Dan Verbeck, Steve Bell, Henry Asbel, Chairman Michael Copps (DVD extra) Sean Dyer, Wayne Coyne,
Associate Producers: Madina Salaty & Kenneth Bjorn Froholdt
Story Consultants: Bernadine Colish & Todd Norris
Director of Photography: Jeff Peak
Camera Operators: Hanumon Brown-Eagle, Bill Connely, Dale Hammer, Rob Hubbard, Ty Jones, Anthony Ladesich, Christopher Lollar, Jill McKeever, Ken Ridgeway, Jeromie P. Whalen, Andrew Wegst, Shawn Wright, Peter von Ziegesar
Assistant Camera: Eric Dickenson & Kelsey Amara
Red Tech: Collin Martin
Boom Operators: Rob Hubbard, Mike Neu, Jill McKeever, Johnny Stark, Amanda Shaw Newsome
Gaffer: Jon Tenholder
Production Assistants: Hank Jackson & Kit Shea
*San Diego Unit*
Director of Photography: Chris Andrus
Sound Recordist: Lewis Cooper
Grip: Chelsie Simmons
Second Unit Director of Photography: Kevin McKinney
3D Animation: Doug Johnston
2D Animation: Brian Mehrens, Mike Snell, Kevin McKinney
Logo Design: Jill McKeever
Rights and Permissions: Kate Coe
Original Music: Chris Crabtree, Antennas Up, GhostyJill McKeever, Clay Vernon, Rich Hill
Ariel Pilot: Lisa Richman
Musician Portraits: Jewel, Chris Crabtree and the Pants, Bob Walkenhorst, Clay Vernon, Danny Cox
Re-enactors
KLZR Driver……..Cypress Frankenfeld
Baseball Kid…………..Timothy Clark
Cop……………………..Todd Panza
Voter……………………..Jill McKeever
Chuck Taylor……..Sean Passmore
Kid letter…………..Lucy Molholland
Mom Letter…………..Kristen France
Grandma Letter ..........Cleofa Herla
Gallery Curator………….Joy Moeller
Cat……………………..Jack
Rat……………………..Rita Doorknob
Station Manager……..Hank Booth
Program Director…………Liz Boyer
Asst. PD………………..Ethan Simmons
Music Director…………..Ken Ridgeway
Asst. MD………………..Kevin McKinney
Promotions Dir..........Lisa Richman
Executive………………..Tony Michaels
Biker……………………..Ray Finley
Biker……………………..Kenny Reed
Biker……………………..Dave Reed
Banker……………………..Jeph Scanlon
Bidder……………………..Heidi Van
Auctioneer…………..Jason R Roske
Grandma………………..Fern Hubbard
CD Man………………..L Rob Hubbard
Pandora Woman……..Monica McAtee
Husband…………….ChadLee McAttee
Tim Dukes………………..Andy Wegst
Mom with Check…………Amy Couture
Kid with Check…………Kate Couture
Kid #2 w/Check………….Leo Couture
Man on Bus……………….Eric Carver
Man on Bus #2…………..Eric Dickenson
Employee #1…………..Marthe Tamblyn
Employee #2…………..Jeff Anderson
Driver………………..Mark Cabrera