

# 40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE

WE WANT THE AIRWAVES!



DIRECTED BY SUE CARPENTER  
WITH MIKE WATT, DON BOLLES, KEITH MORRIS, BOB FORREST, TOM MORELLO,  
STEPHEN DUNIFER / © JOLLY ROGER PRODUCTIONS



## **LOGLINE:**

**FRUSTRATED BY WHAT SHE WAS HEARING ON COMMERCIAL RADIO IN THE '90S, A YOUNG WOMAN BUILDS A STATION FROM SCRATCH AND BROADCASTS FROM HER LOS ANGELES APARTMENT.**

## **SYNOPSIS:**

**"40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE" IS A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT LOS ANGELES PIRATE RADIO STATION KBLT AND THE 1990S LOW-POWER FM MOVEMENT IN THE U.S. IT'S BASED AROUND VINTAGE FOOTAGE SHOT IN 1998 THAT SHOWS KBLT OPERATING 24/7 OUT OF AN APARTMENT CLOSET IN SILVER LAKE WITH DJs RUNNING THE GAMUT FROM KEITH MORRIS (CIRCLE JERKS), MIKE WATT (MINUTEMEN) AND DON BOLLES (GERMS) TO GARDEN-VARIETY MUSIC FANS PLAYING EVERYTHING FROM JUNGLE AND PUNK TO VINTAGE COUNTRY AND FRENCH POP.**

**SUE CARPENTER STARTED THE 40-WATT FM STATION IN 1995, EXPLOITING A LEGAL CASE THAT ALLOWED HUNDREDS OF LOW-POWER ILLEGAL RADIO OPERATORS TO PROLIFERATE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND GAVE BIRTH TO THE LEGAL LPFM MOVEMENT. CARPENTER WAS 28 YEARS OLD, A SECRETARY AND AN ASPIRING JOURNALIST WHEN SHE FIRST SET UP KBLT AND INVITED STRANGERS INTO HER HOUSE TO SPIN WHATEVER THE HELL THEY WANTED. IT SOON TOOK ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN, DRAWING MAZZY STAR TO HEADLINE A BENEFIT CONCERT AND THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS TO PLAY LIVE IN HER LIVING ROOM.**

**THE VINTAGE FOOTAGE CAPTURES THE ARC OF THE STORY, FROM ITS FULL-TILT HEYDAY IN THE SUMMER OF 1998 TO ITS FCC SHUTDOWN LATER THAT YEAR. SHOT BY A DJ WHO INTENDED TO MAKE A DOCUMENTARY BUT NEVER DID, THE VINTAGE FOOTAGE IS ROUNDED OUT WITH INTERVIEWS CARPENTER CONDUCTED IN 2023, INCLUDING RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE GUITARIST TOM MORELLO, MINUTEMEN BASSIST MIKE WATT, GERMS DRUMMER DON BOLLES AND PIRATE RADIO ACTIVIST STEPHEN DUNIFER.**

# 40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE

## TECHNICAL INFO:

**TITLE:**

**40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE**

**GENRE:**

**FEATURE DOCUMENTARY**

**PRODUCTION YEAR:**

**2023-2024**

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:**

**USA**

**LANGUAGE:**

**ENGLISH**

**RUN TIME:**

**89:30**

**SOUND FORMAT:**

**STEREO**





# FILM CREW:

**DIRECTOR, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, PRODUCER – SUE CARPENTER**

**SUE CARPENTER IS A FIRST-TIME DOCUMENTARY DIRECTOR. FOR 30 YEARS, SHE HAS WORKED AS A JOURNALIST IN LOS ANGELES, INCLUDING 14 YEARS AT THE LOS ANGELES TIMES, WHERE SHE WAS THE NEWSPAPER'S FIRST MOTORCYCLE COLUMNIST. SHE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE NEW YORK TIMES, MARKETPLACE RADIO, NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO AND NUMEROUS NATIONAL MAGAZINES, INCLUDING ROAD & TRACK, MARIE CLAIRE AND (IN THE '90S) JANE. SHE CURRENTLY WORKS AS A NATIONAL DIGITAL JOURNALIST FOR SPECTRUM NEWS. BEFORE BECOMING A JOURNALIST, SHE FOUNDED AND RAN A RADIO STATION OUT OF HER APARTMENT CLOSET IN THE SILVER LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD OF LOS ANGELES. THAT STORY IS CHRONICLED IN THE BOOK "40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE" PUBLISHED BY SCRIBNER IN 2004.**

**EDITOR – AMANDA LAWS**

**AMANDA LAWS CO-EDITED THE HIGHLY ACCLAIMED "CAMERAPERSON," DIRECTED BY KIRSTEN JOHNSON, WHICH WAS SHORTLISTED FOR AN ACADEMY AWARD. SOME OF HER RECENT DOCUMENTARY WORK INCLUDES EDITING THE FEATURE FILM "CREDIBLE MESSENGERS," DIRECTED BY ANDRE LAMBERTSON, AND "THE HANGING," DIRECTED BY GEOFF FEINBERG, WHICH PREMIERED AT HOTDOCS AND IDFA. OTHER DOCUMENTARY CREDITS INCLUDE "THE IMPOSTER: HOW TO WRITE A BANJO CONCERTO," DIRECTED BY BELA FLECK AND SASHA PALADINO. SHE IS A TWO-TIME PARTICIPANT IN THE SUNDANCE DOC EDIT LAB AND SERVED AS A MENTOR TO THE DOCUMENTARY FELLOWS AT THE DOXBOX FILM FESTIVAL IN DAMASCUS, SYRIA.**

(CONTINUED)



**PRODUCER, COMPOSER, MUSIC EDITOR – BRANDON JAY**

BRANDON JAY HAS BEEN PLAYING DRUMS SINCE HIS MOTHER LAID OUT POTS AND PANS FOR HIM TO BANG ON. AFTER BEING THE HEART AND SOUL (AND DRUMMER) FOR MANY LA BANDS THROUGH THE YEARS (LUTEFISK, MISS SPIRITUAL TRAMP, THE 88), HE MET HIS WIFE GWENDOLYN SANFORD AND THE TWO BEGAN WRITING AND PRODUCING MUSIC FOR PRESCHOOLERS. GWENDOLYN AND THE GOOD TIME GANG PIONEERED THE TOT ROCK MUSIC SCENE IN LOS ANGELES AND CREATED A FAN BASE THAT LED JAY AND SANFORD TO COMPOSE THE SCORE FOR THE POPULAR SHOWTIME SERIES "WEEDS." "WEEDS" LED TO HARDER STUFF (NAMELY PRISON) IN THE NETFLIX ORIGINAL SERIES "ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK." JAY AND SANFORD ARE ALSO WORKING ON A BROADWAY- BOUND MUSICAL BASED ON THE FILM "ROMY AND MICHELE'S HIGH SCHOOL REUNION." WHEN NOT IN THE STUDIO MAKING MUSIC OR PERFORMING LIVE, JAY ENJOYS LISTENING TO THE RINGING IN HIS EARS.

**DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY – ROBERT SULLIVAN**

ROBERT SULLIVAN (SULLY) BEGAN AS A MEMBER OF THE EARLY '90S LA GROUP, POSSUM DIXON. AS THE GUITARIST/KEYBOARD PLAYER FOR THE BAND, SULLY RODE A WAVE OF EARLY '90S LOCAL FAME FOR A FEW GLORIOUS YEARS BEFORE REAL LIFE CAME KNOCKING. POST ALT-ROCK, HE GOT A JOB AND SPENT HIS FREE TIME HOSTING A SUNDAY MORNING DJ SHOW ON KBLT SPINNING CLASSIC AMERICAN COUNTRY MUSIC. FAST FORWARD 25 YEARS, AND SULLY'S NEW BIGGEST FANS ARE HIS WIFE AND COLLEGE-AGED SON, WHO OCCASIONALLY PLAY POSSUM DIXON JUST TO TEASE HIM THAT HE WAS ONCE A LOCAL ROCK STAR.

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## **MUSIC SUPERVISOR – MARA KUGE**

MARA KUGE HAS 20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD OF MUSIC LICENSING AND SYNCH. HER RECENT MUSIC SUPERVISION PROJECTS INCLUDE FILMS STREAMING ON NETFLIX ("THE STAND AT PAXTON COUNTY") AND HULU ("FOR MADMEN ONLY: THE STORIES OF DEL CLOSE"). KUGE IS A MEMBER OF THE GUILD OF MUSIC SUPERVISORS AND IS THE PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF SUPERIOR MUSIC PUBLISHING. FOR "40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE," KUGE RESEARCHED AND CLEARED 70 SONGS RANGING FROM MAJOR-LABEL HITS TO OBSCURE CHILDREN'S 78S.

## **ANIMATOR – JONATHON STEARNS**

JONATHON STEARNS IS AN AWARD-WINNING LOS ANGELES-BASED FILM-MAKER, ANIMATOR, WRITER, MUSICIAN AND PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. IN THE 1990S, HE WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE LA MUSIC SCENE AS BOTH A MUSICIAN/BAND LEADER AND FILMMAKER, DIRECTING MUSIC VIDEOS AND DOCUMENTARIES. HE FOUNDED PRODUCTION STUDIO CHANNEL B4 IN 2001. HE IS CURRENTLY IN PRODUCTION ON AN ANIMATED FEATURE BASED ON A CLASSIC HG WELLS SHORT.

## **SOUND MIXER – JON LYGA**

JON LYGA IS A RE-RECORDING MIXER AND SOUND DESIGNER WITH 15 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY. HIS WORK SPANS NUMEROUS SCRIPTED AND UNSCRIPTED TELEVISION SHOWS AND FEATURE FILMS, INCLUDING "FOOD PARADISE," "RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE," "GAMER'S GUIDE TO PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING" AND "TIME TRAP." A TINKERER AT HEART, JON IS PASSIONATE ABOUT FINDING THE PERFECT SOUND FOR EVERY MOMENT, BLENDING TECHNICAL PRECISION WITH CREATIVE STORYTELLING.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

## WHAT IS PIRATE RADIO?

PIRATE RADIO IS A RADIO STATION THAT BROADCASTS WITHOUT A LICENSE FROM THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION. IT'S ALSO KNOWN AS MICRO RADIO OR LOW-POWER FM RADIO. DURING THE 1990S, STEPHEN DUNIFER LAUNCHED THE MICRO RADIO MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, CHALLENGING THE FCC OVER ITS LICENSING REQUIREMENTS IN A LEGAL BATTLE THAT LASTED SEVERAL YEARS.

## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO MAKE THE MOVIE?

"40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE" WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN MADE IF FORMER KBLT DJ ROBERT SULLIVAN HADN'T REACHED OUT TO SAY HE FOUND 12 HOURS OF VIDEO FOOTAGE HE SHOT IN 1998. SULLIVAN HAD PURCHASED A MINI DIGITAL VIDEO CAMERA SHORTLY AFTER THEY CAME ON THE MARKET AND WAS HOPING TO DOCUMENT THE STATION FOR A DOCUMENTARY THAT HE NEVER MADE. HE REDISCOVERED THE TAPES IN 2023.

## ISN'T "40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE" A BOOK?

"40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE" STARTED OUT AS A BOOK. SUE CARPENTER WROTE THE PIRATE RADIO MEMOIR ABOUT TWO YEARS AFTER THE FCC CONFISCATED HER EQUIPMENT WHILE THE EXPERIENCE WAS FRESH IN HER MIND. SCRIBNER PUBLISHED IT IN 2004. IT IS CURRENTLY OUT OF PRINT.

## ISN'T "40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE" A PLAY?

"40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE" IS ALSO AN EXPERIENTIAL THEATER PIECE. THE MISTER & MISCHIEF PRODUCTION COMPANY ORIGINALLY STAGED IT AT THE LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE AS PART OF THE WITHOUT WALLS FESTIVAL IN 2022. IT HAD A SECOND RUN ABOUT TWO BLOCKS FROM THE ORIGINAL KBLT LOCATION FROM NOVEMBER 2022 THROUGH MARCH 2023.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

(CONTINUED)

## WHERE WAS KBLT LOCATED?

THE STATION OPERATED OUT OF AN APARTMENT ON SANBORN AVE. IN SILVER LAKE, LOS ANGELES.

## WHAT BANDS CAME TO KBLT?

DOZENS OF BANDS CAME TO KBLT TO DJ OR BE INTERVIEWED OR TO PERFORM LIVE. DON BOLLES (GERMS), KEITH MORRIS (CIRCLE JERKS), MIKE WATT (MINUTEMEN) AND BOB FORREST (THELONIOUS MONSTER) ALL HAD THEIR OWN SHOWS. THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS PLAYED LIVE AT KBLT IN JUNE 1998. MAZZY STAR HEADLINED A BENEFIT CONCERT IN 1997. COUNTLESS OTHER BANDS STOPPED BY TO PROMOTE THEIR SHOWS IN LA, INCLUDING JASON PIERCE (SPIRITUALIZED), WAYNE COYNE (FLAMING LIPS), JESUS AND MARY CHAIN, GLENN DANZIG (MISFITS), JUDAH BAUER (JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION), RANCID, HOWIE B AND JOHN SQUIRE (STONE ROSES).

## HOW COULD YOU RUN A RADIO STATION WITH NO MONEY?

LOW-POWER FM EQUIPMENT ONLY COST A FEW HUNDRED DOLLARS IN THE '90S. OPERATING AT SUCH A LOW WATTAGE, THE ELECTRICITY COSTS WERE ALSO NOMINAL.

## HOW DID YOU PAY FOR THIS MOVIE?

FOLLOWING TWO FAILED ATTEMPTS AT FUNDRAISING, SUE CARPENTER DECIDED TO SELF-FINANCE THE FILM. WEIRDLY, AT AROUND THE SAME TIME THAT SUE WAS CONSIDERING MAKING THE MOVIE, SHE GOT A NOTICE IN THE MAIL THAT SAID SHE HAD A PENSION THROUGH HER OLD EMPLOYER, THE LOS ANGELES TIMES. SHE HADN'T EVEN KNOWN SHE HAD A PENSION THROUGH THE TIMES, BUT THE NOTICE WAS SAYING SHE COULD TAKE A LUMP-SUM PAYMENT. IT FELT LIKE FREE MONEY, SO SHE CASHED IT IN AS SEED MONEY FOR THIS PROJECT.

# CONTACT INFORMATION:

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# CAST:

**SUE CARPENTER:** FOUNDER/OPERATOR OF KBLT PIRATE RADIO IN LA AND KPBJ IN SAN FRANCISCO

**STEPHEN DUNIFER:** FREE RADIO BERKELEY OPERATOR AND FOUNDER OF THE 1990S LOW-POWER FM MOVEMENT

**TOM MORELLO:** RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE GUITARIST

**DON BOLLES:** GERMS DRUMMER, KBLT DJ

**KEITH MORRIS:** BLACK FLAG AND CIRCLE JERKS SINGER, KBLT DJ

**MIKE WATT:** MINUTEMEN BASS PLAYER, KBLT DJ

**BOB FORREST:** THELONIOUS MONSTER AND BICYCLE THIEF SINGER, KBLT DJ

**CAMILLE ROSE GARCIA:** ARTIST

**JOEL SELVIN:** MUSIC CRITIC AND AUTHOR

**BRAD GATES:** TED ZEPPELIN LEAD SINGER, KPBJ DJ

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**GALEN NEWMAN: KPBJ DJ**

**JACK CHEESE: PIRATE RADIO OPERATOR IN LA**

**ALAN WOOD: PIRATE RADIO OPERATOR IN SAN FRANCISCO, KPBJ  
AND KBLT ENGINEER**

**TORI HOROWITZ: KBLT DJ**

**DANA CHILDS: KBLT DJ**

**MIWA OKUMURA: KBLT DJ**

**CHRIS CAREY: KBLT DJ**

**WING KO: KBLT DJ**

**SHONDRA RILEY: KBLT DJ**

**CHRIS WAGGANER:  
KBLT ENGINEER AND DJ**

**CAROLYN KELLOGG: KBLT DJ**

**ALAN KORN:  
STEPHEN DUNIFER'S ATTORNEY**

**JAY BABCOCK: KBLT DJ**

**MARK MAUER: KBLT DJ**

**MARK ROEDER: KBLT LISTENER**

**BRANDON JAY: MUSICIAN, KBLT DJ**

**LAUREL STEARNS: KBLT DJ**



# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

"40 WATTS FROM NOWHERE" WOULD NOT EXIST IF I HADN'T DISCOVERED 12 HOURS OF FOOTAGE FROM 1998 THAT I NEVER EVEN KNEW EXISTED UNTIL EARLY 2023. ONE OF THE DJs AT THE PIRATE RADIO STATION I OPERATED OUT OF MY APARTMENT CLOSET FOR THREE YEARS STARTED FILMING THE STATION, THINKING HE WOULD MAKE A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT IT BECAUSE HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF ANYONE RUNNING A PIRATE RADIO STATION IN LA BEFORE. INSTEAD OF MAKING THE MOVIE, HE THREW THE MINI DV TAPES IN A BOX.

I HADN'T SPOKEN TO THAT DJ IN 25 YEARS WHEN HE REACHED OUT TO ME IN EARLY 2023 TO SAY HE HAD JUST FOUND THEM IN HIS GARAGE AND ASKED IF I WANTED THEM. OF COURSE, I SAID YES. GOING THROUGH THE FOOTAGE, I SAW HE HAD CAPTURED THE ENTIRE ARC OF THE STORY, FROM ITS FULL-TILT HEYDAY IN THE SUMMER OF 1998 WHEN THE STATION WAS OPERATING 24 HOURS A DAY WITH A DIFFERENT DJ EVERY TWO HOURS TO ITS SHUTDOWN BY THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION LATER THAT YEAR.

AS A LONG-TIME JOURNALIST WHO HAS WORKED IN PRINT, RADIO AND TELEVISION, I FELT I HAD BEEN PRESENTED AN OPPORTUNITY TO TELL THIS STORY IN A NEW MEDIUM THAT WOULD MELD THE DIFFERENT SKILLS I'D LEARNED OVER THE YEARS AS A MULTIMEDIA REPORTER. IN THE 27 YEARS SINCE I WAS BUSTED BY THE FCC, VARIOUS SCREENWRITERS AND PRODUCTION COMPANIES HAVE REACHED OUT TO ME WANTING TO TURN THE STORY INTO A FILM, BUT IT NEVER HAPPENED. WITH VINTAGE FOOTAGE IN HAND, MAKING A DOCUMENTARY SEEMED LIKE THE MOST AUTHENTIC WAY TO TELL THE STORY.

I APPROACHED THE FILM THE SAME WAY I APPROACHED THE RADIO STATION. I HAD NO IDEA WHAT I WAS DOING, BUT I FELT VERY STRONGLY THAT I NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. SO I DID.

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**THERE ARE A LOT OF PARALLELS BETWEEN STARTING A RADIO STATION FROM SCRATCH AND MAKING A DOCUMENTARY FOR THE FIRST TIME. IN BOTH CASES, I NAIVELY THOUGHT: HOW HARD COULD IT BE? WELL, IT TAKES A COMMUNITY.**

**LUCKILY, I HAD A PRE-EXISTING COMMUNITY OF DJs CREATED THROUGH THE RADIO STATION DECADES EARLIER, MANY OF WHOM I HADN'T SEEN IN DECADES WHEN I REACHED OUT TO THEM FOR INTERVIEWS AND WHO OFFERED TO COME ON BOARD FOR THIS PROJECT. JUST LIKE THE RADIO STATION, WHICH GREW INTO A BELOVED CENTER OF THE LOCAL MUSIC SCENE BACK IN THE DAY, THEY HELPED EVOLVE THE DOCUMENTARY FROM A RAW IDEA INTO A FEATURE-LENGTH FILM WITH HEART, GRIT AND DYNAMISM.**

**WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM RUNNING A PIRATE RADIO STATION AND, NOW, MAKING A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT IT IS THERE'S POWER IN ALLOWING PEOPLE TO BE THEIR AUTHENTIC SELVES. IF SOMEONE HAS A GOOD IDEA, JUST GET OUT OF THE WAY AND LET IT HAPPEN.**

**OVER THE COURSE OF 90 MINUTES, I'M HOPING VIEWERS WILL FEEL THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF DOING SOMETHING AS RISKY AS CO-OPTING THE AIRWAVES WITHOUT A LICENSE. I'M HOPING THEY GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHY THAT WAS EVEN NECESSARY IN THE PRE-DIGITAL ERA. MOST OF ALL, I HOPE THEY FEEL INSPIRED TO BREAK OUT OF THEIR COMFORT ZONES, FOLLOW THEIR PASSIONS AND ATTEMPT THE IMPOSSIBLE.**

**—SUE CARPENTER**



Friday  
Aug. 13th





Friday  
Aug. 13<sup>th</sup>





Friday  
Aug. 13<sup>th</sup>

