

Juliette Zentelis takes her own medicine and gets paid for it, two nights a week.

Zentelis, 34, is Seattle's own blues doctor. For the past eight years, she hosted KPLU's "All Blues" show. Every weekend night, from 7:00 pm -10:00 pm, listeners would tune in to hear Juliette's prescription. "There's not one person who's never had the blues. There's something about that music that's medicine for the soul. Whether you're happy or sad, it's just total medicine - vitamins for the soul."

For Juliette, the blues and the passion it inspires are a way of life. Tall, with blonde hair streaming around her face and a ready laugh, she radiates ease. From pretending to be a DJ as a child to starting a recent show with a funky James Brown tune, Juliette has followed her heart and done as she pleased. Early influences included her father, imported from Michigan every year to co host her annual Father's Day show, and her grandmother, an early supporter of Juliette's adventurous spirit. "She was a young Jew in World War II who survived the holocaust and saved others in the process. She was my best friend and really influenced me."

In unconscious imitation of one of her blues idols, Robert Johnson, Juliette followed her passions through her feet. Even before graduating from high school, she left home for Atlanta. Then came Costa Rica. She was 18, living on the beach for six months, and unofficially married to a Costa Rican. "I loved it! I went there for the craziness."

The real world eventually beckoned. Juliette dove into radio at Western Washington University in Bellingham, taking sound engineering courses, becoming the Program Director, and expanding her rock show on KUGS into "Blues on Fire." Juliette would have stayed there longer, but quit after the station changed to a different format.

She didn't have to wait long to get back into radio. Hiring unemployed radio friends and with a "piece of crap" truck in tow, Juliette started her own landscaping business. However, a tip from a friend that KPLU was looking for a new blues host changed her course.

Initially, Juliette didn't think she had a chance. "I started laughing because I never thought of myself as a professional [DJ]." Her favorite slide-guitar player, Nick Vigarino, convinced her she had a shot. She cut a demo tape and sent it off to KPLU. In the meantime, a gaggle of blue friends pressed Joe Cohn (KPLU's music director) to give Juliette a chance. "By the end of the week, I think he got so tired of the phone calls, he invited me to the station."

The demo tape didn't do the job and the station asked for another. Juliette also had reservations. "I never thought of myself as a radio personality. But they liked the way I presented and mixed the music. They liked my enthusiasm and knew I could get better." She was up against a professional DJ with a voice as "smooth as butter" but Juliette's enthusiasm and knowledge of the blues won out. "I finally got it – I was amazed! I was straightforward and said I wanna do what I wanna do and not be bound by specific roles. Though I was willing to work with them too."

Juliette prepares assiduously for each show. She pours over magazines and the Internet to find new music and stories on topical issues. "I try to incorporate the show with what's going on in the world because they [music directors] want you to be a personality, not just a blues freak!"

On air, she conveys an engaging mixture of professionalism and abandon. Juliette injects her commentary with humor and spunk, never hesitating to laugh at the occasional mishap like a skipped CD or mispronounced name. Even hiccups are fair game for reaching her audience; she once invited callers with suggestions to make them stop. Blues legends she's interviewed leave

her admiring but unfazed. "The interesting interview is where you're just being yourself. I asked BB King where the best BBQ was on the road. He said he'd been a vegetarian for 14 years."

Juliette now works for KZOK FM (102.5), Seattle's classic rock station. "I love it. I get to work with some of my radio heroes!" She's on the air every Saturday and Sunday night, 7 pm to midnight, playing rock favorites and at least a blues tune or two. "As Muddy Waters put it, 'the blues had a baby and they named it rock and roll.' "

The recent move has done nothing to dim her commitment to the blues. If anything, the passion has grown deeper. Juliette now has her own web site, bluesnorthwest.com. When launched, it will present a variety of blues offerings including blues history, web streaming (audio clips), and web casting (video clips).

Juliette loves her job and it shows. She's taken some chances, but has always been guided by love for the blues, for radio, and a commitment to living life to the fullest. "The blues are such pure emotion. Being a DJ is fun for me to do and fun for the listeners too. It's the job of my dreams."