

OPEN NINTH:

CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM

STUCK IN THE '80s WITH DJ RUFUS

EPISODE 5

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(Music.)

>> Welcome to Episode 5 of "Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom" in the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida.

Now here's your host, Chief Judge Frederick J. Lauten.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** This morning I'm with Ninth Circuit Judge Bob LeBlanc, and we're in the radio studio of WPRK, The Voice of Rollins College at 91.5 on the FM dial, which is commonly referred to as "The Best in Basement Radio."

As a Rollins graduate, I happen to know that WPRK is a nonprofit, independent-variety format radio station that's been broadcasting since 1952.

So we're here in the basement of the radio station. It just so happens that one of the Ninth Circuit judges, Judge Bob LeBlanc, is a DJ for the station and hosts "Stuck in the 80s with DJ Rufus."

Good morning, Bob.

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** Good morning.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** This is an interesting job. It's an interesting time of day. How did it happen that you got this position? Did you have to audition? Tell us how you landed here.

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** Well, of course I'm a music lover and have been my whole life. I've been listening to WPRK since I first came to Orlando in the early '80s. When I first

thought about being a DJ, one of the first things I thought about was whether or not it would offend the sensibilities of someone who thought what a judge should or should not do.

So I think I may have talked with you. I don't remember. I talked with several people. We decided since it was a noncommercial station, that it was a college station, if I wanted to pursue it, it would be okay.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: Great. Great.

So you selected the name DJ Rufus. I'm sure I and our listeners are curious about that title. Can you tell us how you selected that name?

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: Well, I didn't want to use my real name on the air, and two people I always admired, Rufus Thomas, who's an old, black Blues guitarist who's played with B.B. King and several other musicians in the Mississippi area I admired, and Rufus Wainwright, who is a current musician. His father was the '60s and '70s folksinger Loudon Wainwright III, and his mother is Kate McGarrigle, who is the duo of Kate & Anna McGarrigle, a famous Canadian folk band. He's one of the -- my favorite singers around today, and I just thought Rufus was a great name.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: Any feedback you've gotten from listeners or colleagues or anybody about your selection as DJ Rufus as your handle?

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: I've been called doofus.

(Laughter.)

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Tell us why '80s alternative new-wave music as opposed to any other genre.

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** I think probably everyone has, depending on their age, a favorite genre and era. The '80s were a time when my wife and I both graduated from college, we decided to get married, we decided to go law school -- I decided to go to law school. She supported me through that effort.

And, you know, we were dating before we got married, we were going out, we were living in Boston, which was a very new-wave city, music-wise. And we started listening to the music and fell in love with it.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great. That's great. Now, have you seen any '80s groups live? Seen any recently?

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** Not recently. At my age, I think I'm too old to go to concerts. But in the '80s when the albums were current, I saw Echo & the Bunnymen. I saw The Smiths. I saw New Order. I saw pretty much everyone I wanted to see before law school.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's great. That's great. Well, I imagine it takes a lot of preparation for a set. First of all, how long are you on air?

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** I'm on Wednesday mornings from 5:00 to 7:00. And I chose that shift because primarily I never

wanted it to interfere with my day job. I'm finished at 7:00 A.M., and I'm home by 7:20, and I am showered and shaved and in court by 9:00 A.M.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So when you arrive at this campus at 5:00 A.M., there probably aren't too many students wandering around when you get here.

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** There's nobody wandering around except a security guard on a golf cart.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Tell me a little bit about the preparation for two hours of music. I imagine that takes some prep time and some work.

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** I've got about 400 or 500 CDs from the 80s. I have many more CDs from other years, but I have 400 or 500 from the '80s. And I, every Sunday afternoon or evening, I will sit at my dining room table and I will cull through the CDs and I'll put together what I think are two hours that blend together well.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Wow. That's quite a collection that you have. When I walked in, I noticed that there was a wall full of CDs here. Do you pull most -- mostly from your private collection or do you also pull from the collection here at Rollins?

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** I pull from the Rollins collection if it's something I want to hear that I don't have. Otherwise, I pretty much play my own collection.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's quite a collection. That's impressive. Have you thought ever maybe about expanding beyond the '80s? Do you only play '80s music? Do you sometimes play earlier or later music?

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** I will play -- for example, I played some '60s, Aretha Franklin, and then followed it up with some 2006 Amy Winehouse because I thought listening to both of those women singing blended very well together. So it's not -- it's mostly '80s, but technically, the name of the show is "Stuck in the '80s or Thereabouts."

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right. Right.

Now, you are not a Rollins student. Tell me a little bit about the blend of Rollins student's DJs and non-Rollins students as DJs here at WPRK.

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** First of all, it's an all volunteer station, and Rollins gives primary opportunity to students. When the students don't fill in the hours -- and they prefer students not be there from 10:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M., they want them sleeping or studying --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** -- so the nighttime hours are primarily community volunteers.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Wow. That's great. Is this a show where you ever take call-ins? Do you get call-ins?

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** I get call-ins. Mostly I get tweets

or Facebook posts from people that know the Facebook --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Do you have a most-interesting call or tweet or is it mostly just commenting or asking for requests?

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** The most interesting to me was a current -- I won't name him -- but a current sitting judge who called me and fooled me with a funny phone call.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Yeah. Well, we do have some pranksters which is a well-kept secret from the public.

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** I've got to make some announcements on the air, if you don't mind.

Hi. Good morning, everyone. Thank you once again for listening. We started that set at the top of the hour with Roxy Music from their 1982 Warner Brothers album, *Avalon*. That was the title track.

And then we went to Suzanne Vega from her 1987 A&M album, *Solitude Standing*. And of course the great song everyone knows, "My Name is Luca."

Echo & the Bunnymen from their self-titled 1987 Sire album, *Echo & the Bunnymen*, that was "Lips Like Sugar."

And then we heard from New Order, their 1983 Factory album, *Power, Corruption & Lies*. That was "Age of Consent."

Alison Krauss, which was by request, "Down to the River to Pray" from the 2000 soundtrack to *O Brother, Where Art Thou*, the George Clooney movie.

Then we heard from The Romantics, their self-titled

debut album from 1979 that's always requested, "What I Like About You."

And now we're listening to Modern English from their 1982 album *After the Snow*, "I Melt With You."

I'm actually in the studio with Circuit Judge Frederick Lauten. We're having a little Q & A session, and we'll be back with some more music.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: Do you have a musical background? Have you been in a band? Are you a singer or performer?

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: No. I have no talent whatsoever. I can't sing, I can't play an instrument. I wish I could. And because I can't, I appreciate someone else's talent.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, I happen to know, because I know you personally, I know that you're truly a Renaissance man. I know that you love great food. I know you love great books. I know now that you love great music.

Do you mostly listen to music at home? Are you a *TV-ophile*, kind of, what's -- I don't mean to invade your personal space.

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: I don't really watch much TV. I watch news shows. When we have dinner parties, I will actually put three hours of music together and just have that in the background. I just sort of love putting music that is -- starts out louder for cocktails, gets a little quieter for dinner, and then calms down for after-dinner

conversation. I try to create an ambience when we have a dinner party.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: Now, I'm amazed at how sophisticated this studio is in terms of the computer equipment that is in here, the CD player that is in here, the microphones that are in here, the music collection that's in here. And you've got to balance lots of activity when you're the DJ, and I've never realized that before, maybe because I haven't visited a radio studio.

Tell me a little bit about keeping it all together while you're in charge.

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: Whether you're playing vinyl or CDs or even using TIDAL or iTunes on your laptop, either way you've got to cue up the next song. We're required to enter every song we play into Spinitron.com, which tracks all music played, I guess for royalties, for ASCAP and BMI purposes.

So you're not only thinking about the next song you're playing, not only trying to cue it up, but you have to upload the information on the computer so it uploads on Spinitron.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: So you're working while you're here.

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: It's a busy two hours.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: Do you keep track of what you've played so you're not repeating what you've played too?

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: I keep track of what I've played. I have my playlist from every week for the last year and a

half. But I don't necessarily care if I repeat a song. My most-requested album I play at least every other week, one or two cuts from that album. It's called *Floodland* by The Sisters of Mercy, which were a British alternative band from, like, '84 or '85. And oddly enough it's the most requested. Even though there's only nine songs, I'll play one or two almost every week because people will email and ask can I play a Sisters of Mercy song.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: So do you have a favorite '80s song or a favorite '80s group that you would recommend above all others or is that too limited?

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: I have -- I think I would probably say New Order or The Smiths are my two favorite bands. There's a song called "Age of Consent" and another song called "Your Silent Face." If I put those two songs on a two-hour loop, I could hear them over and over again.

In terms of my wife and I, Naked Eyes did a version of a Burt Bacharach and Hal David song called "Always Something There To Remind You" which was a huge hit in '83, which was the year before we got married, we were dating.

And even though it's a song about a jilted lover, everywhere he goes, he sees things that remind him of her. So to this day, when my wife and I hear that song, we might hold hands, we might look and wink at each other, depending on the circumstance, and that's probably the most reminiscent

of the '80s for us.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's great. That's great. Have you -- do you have experience in radio prior to this? Were you a DJ? You have a fabulous voice for radio.

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** Doesn't everyone hate their voice? I've always hated mine.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** No, it sounds great. Trust me when I tell you that. But I know that same sensation when you hear your own voice, it's disconcerting.

Was this your first experience as a DJ?

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** Yes. I actually became friends with Jack Riley, who hosts a show on WPRK called "Magic Transistor Radio." Somehow he played music that I liked. I emailed him on the station, and we became friends.

And he said to me one day, you sound like you've always wanted to be a DJ. Why don't I show you how the equipment works, and if you're comfortable with it, you can send an application in to Rollins. When a time slot opens up, you can pick that time slot, if you want. And it worked out.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So there's a lot of equipment in this room. How much time did it take you to sort of master the deck that I see and the soundboard that I see and the microphones that I see and all the computer equipment that's in here?

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** As required by Rollins, I spent three

weeks with him during his show and then I started my first show, and he sat in with me during my first show to make sure I could operate all the equipment.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right. Well, what was the experience like the very first time you were solo in the studio and in charge of everything? Was that nerve-racking? Exciting? Was it a little bit of both?

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** It was a little bit of both, and I'm glad that it was not recorded.

(Laughter.)

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So I know that your experience as a judge has included presiding over criminal courts where individuals appear in front of you, either accused of crimes and all the stress that that creates, or victims of crimes. I know you've sat in family where you're dealing with families in trauma because of divorce. And I think most judges feel that there is a certain amount of stress that goes along with the decisions that we're asked to make as judges.

Does this give you a little bit of break from that sort of pressure that goes along with our job?

>> **JUDGE LeBLANC:** Oh, I think probably every one of us has something that we do in our private lives that gives us some relief from tension. And I don't use the word "stress" because I think I've had very dark, difficult days and very

dark, difficult decisions as a judge. And I'm honored with the job. I'm humbled every day.

I don't necessarily think it translates into me being stressed. I think the day or the decision may be stressful, but the job as a whole, it's very humbling, and I'm very honored.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: How long do you plan on a radio show in your -- in your life? How long would you like to do this?

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: Well, until I'm tired of it. I prefer using CDs. The kids at Rollins think we're so old-fashioned that we're not simply streaming online all the songs that we want. When they get rid of the CD players, I may close it down or I may just, you know, subscribe -- I subscribe to iTunes anyway. I guess I can figure out how to do it on a laptop.

When I retire, my wife and I have a summer house in Blue Hill, Maine, which is a small village on the coast. It also happens to have an all-volunteer radio station. So, you know, if I'm still doing it and I can do summers in Maine and winters in Orlando, who knows?

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: Well, Bob, I want to say, we've known each other for many years. We tried cases together as lawyers. I had the privilege of presiding over cases you tried as an attorney -- and you were an excellent trial attorney. And now it's really a thrill for me to work with

you as a colleague.

I know how well-respected you are amongst all of our colleagues and amongst the Bar. I want to thank you for your service as a judge to the citizens of this region, and I want to especially thank you for allowing us to come into the studio today and interview you. And I'm gonna ask a favor. Will you take us out with one of your favorite songs that you mentioned earlier in the interview?

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: Well, first of all, thank you very much. I've been honored for ten years to do this job, and I hope I can do it for another ten years.

If I could start or begin every show with the same song, I would probably play "Your Silent Face" by New Order from a 1983 album called *Power, Corruption & Lies*.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: And will you do that for us?

>> JUDGE LeBLANC: Sure.

>> ¶ Thought that never changes

Remains a stupid lie. ¶

¶ It's never --

>> Thank you for listening to "Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom" brought to you by Chief Judge Frederick J. Lauten and the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida.

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(Music.)