

Talking heads

Morning show duo spins its un-PC charm

By MATT VOLPI
Collegian Arts Writer

It's dark. It's cold. The streets are empty, bathed in the yellow and red glow of blinking traffic lights.

It's time for the Wenck and Biddle Show.

But the dynamic duo of FM in the a.m. doesn't mind the early hours required for the 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. time slot on WQWK-FM (97QWK).

"I love it," Steve Biddle said. "It's the most fun I've had on the radio in years."

Biddle, a 39-year-old radio journeyman, has done everything from straight news to disc jockeying in places as exotic as Hawaii. Biddle was working part time at WQWK-FM's sister station, WRSC-AM, before he filled in on 97QWK's morning show. When Ed Wenck arrived from Syracuse, they seemed to click, and Biddle stayed on as both a sidekick and a news reporter.

"I kind of wing it and react to what he does," Biddle said. "I don't consider myself a broadcast journalist... I used to be."

"I ruined that," Wenck said. "On one of their frequent smoke breaks, free from the cramped broadcast booth, Biddle — between puffs from his Alpine — said he uses major news stories in news segments, in addition to pieces about unusual topics such as brasserie bridges across the Grand Canyon. Both also like to add their own commentary to the day's headlines.

"The news isn't entirely void of editorial comment," said Biddle, sporting the L.L. Bean mountain man look with a turtleneck and sweater complementing his medium-length locks and brown beard.

Although news may be Biddle's specialty, Wenck is the desig-

nated funny man, a seasoned veteran of the stand-up circuit who hasn't forgotten his old tricks. The 30-year-old has a repertoire of characters who make appearances on the show.

During this particular Christmas season show, when, in Wenck's words, the "yuletide's just stickin' with you like a wet pair of shorts," Polly Naugahynde visited. Wenck took on a raspy woman's voice and presented her holiday shopping guide. Her suggestions ranged from fashion tips to gift-gathering in a Best Western.

"Lime green stretch pants will flatter any woman," Naugahynde said.

But not all of the characters appearing on the show are Wenck's. Some listeners have made up their own, such as a veterinarian who plays Homer Bucksart Yarnell.

As a mysterious top ten list of elf pick-up lines was faxed into the office, both Wenck and Biddle said listener response is an integral part of the show.

"We have quite a number of people who call us up on a regular basis," Wenck said.

"We like regularity in our listeners," Biddle chimed in.

One listener called to thank them for helping him shoot a deer during hunting season because he saw the deer when he turned up the volume.

"This show affects people in ways they don't even know," Wenck said.

"Wait until you see what we can do for you during spring gobbler season," Biddle added.

The show's off-beat style is a welcome change to some who tune in.

"I appreciate their humor," said Scott Slutter of State College.

But one other listener isn't



Ed Wenck
designated funny man

Collegian Photo/Debi Winkler

happy about 97QWK's switch to Wenck and Biddle from the old team of Tom Regan and Karen Pingar.

"They're not the same pair as Tom and Karen — they lack the local flair," said David Letterman of State College. "You don't have much choice with the different radio stations if you like that kind of music."

Listener response aside, the team's good nature carries over into the station. A.J., the graveyard shift disc jockey on 97QWK, said Wenck and Biddle make her life easier.

"I like working with them 'cause they're not stiff, they're not rude," A.J. said. "If there's a problem, they don't get all bent out of shape."

That good nature and humor are not the only ingredients of the duo's morning routine — Wenck's song parodies are also an integral part of the show. Having developed the skill during his five-year stand-up career, such yuletide tunes as "Cheap Christmas" and "Death Metal Christmas" are bits Wenck develops easily.

"(I) just sit down and fart around with a guitar," Wenck said. "I used a guitar in my act so it's something that comes pretty naturally to me."

Although Wenck — who pulls his curly black ponytail back under a County Jail baseball cap — puts in 10 hours a day at the station producing and preparing, he doesn't spend any time deciding the play list, which ranged from "chick rock" such as Journey to the Top 40-minded Gin Blossoms.

"(It) is determined through a long statistical process known as hiring a consultant," he said. The Wenck and Biddle Show

has drummed up a bit of controversy in the age of political correctness, but both deny they are out to offend anyone.

"We have no sacred cows," Wenck said. "If you don't have a sense of humor, you shouldn't listen to our program."

Biddle, who slipped out during the broadcast to wake up his wife, agreed.

"When we make fun of stereotypes, it's not with the intention of hurting anyone," he said.

Both also respect the king of radio controversy, Howard Stern. "My favorite thing about Howard Stern is his attitude," Wenck said. "He did so much for opening up this medium."

On the air, Wenck embraces the show's reputation. "Politically incorrect and proud," Wenck said. "Gimme the remote control and a side of beef and I'm a happy man."

Although the show may occasionally insult people, Biddle said the most memorable stunt didn't involve stereotypes — but it wasn't authorized by the station either.

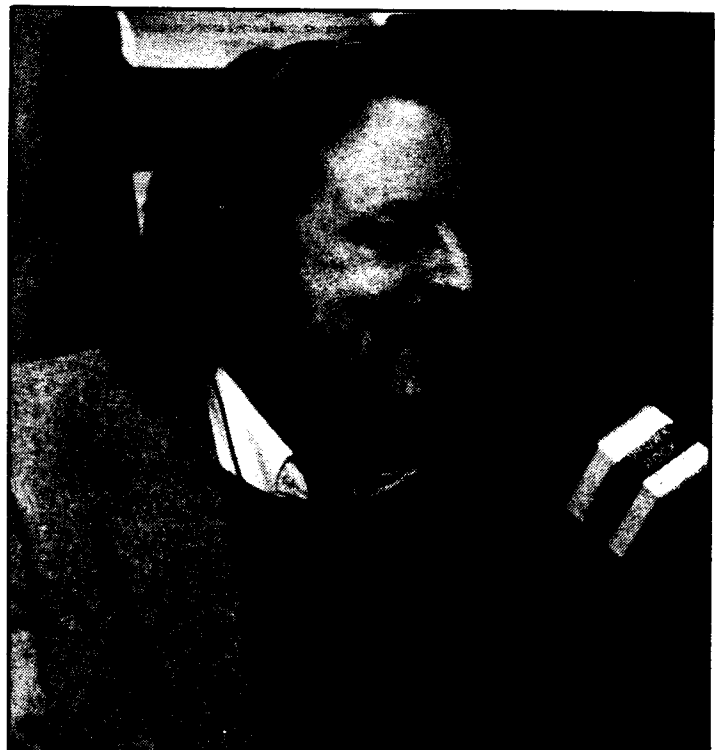
"The day Ed took off with the van, grabbed those prizes and gave away \$1,000," Biddle said. "We had a lot of people with their knickers in a twist about that."

So what is the secret of success for a pair who call "The Simpsons" a "Zen state of mind?"

"Fizzies," Biddle said. "No, they don't make those anymore." On a more serious note, Biddle said mutual respect and instinct mold their relationship.

"We don't compete with each other," Biddle said. "We balance each other."

But despite all the hassle, both are happy with the results. "This is our show," Wenck said. "And nobody can have it," Biddle replied.



Steve Biddle
radio sidekick and straight man

Collegian Photo/Debi Winkler

Our critics cite 1993's film feats

By JAMES DOOLITTLE
and MATT VOLPI
Collegian Arts Writers

In the fast-paced year in film that was 1993, Hollywood on the whole had its eyes fixed on the rear-view mirror. Unfortunately, the films were farther than they appeared, ideas and budgets lost in the passing lane.

Hollywood recycled every possible genre, motif and character type this year in its continual quest for the almighty dollar. Box-office records were broken while careers seemed terminated — at least until their next film.

Many critics looked back on 1993 as a golden year for movies, the first, perhaps, since the '70s. The fall/winter movie season turned up its share of aces, including *The Piano* and *Six Degrees of Separation*, but let's not forget the dismal spring and summer seasons, full of such classics as *Body of Evidence* and *Made in America*.

As usual, the box office was a cruel place for some while others reaped the rewards of a loyal audience. Arnold Schwarzenegger's spoof (*The Last Action Hero*) was spoiled while Harrison Ford had a runaway hit (*The Fugitive*). Dinosaurs and whales replaced good scripts while upstaging their human counterparts. Locations were key as we got sappy in Seattle, murdered in Manhattan and *Lost in Yonkers* — literally.

But through the bad, as always, the good emerged. Two veterans continued their hot streaks. Clint Eastwood was primed while Robert Altman took some *Short Cuts* to produce his best work yet. Woody Allen shook off the media. Quentin Tarantino got some and Steven Spielberg covered prehistoric beasts as well as modern ones.

So here are the best films of Clinton's first year, say us:

■ **Addams Family Values** The cast returns and outdoes its original *Addams Family* performance. The tongue-in-cheek humor and puns are hilarious and Christina Ricci steals the show as Wednesday. Her malcontent recreation of Pocahontas is unbelievable, while the abstract Addams' interests never stop rolling. (M.V.)

■ **Dave** Kevin Kline assumes yet another great role and gets a pile o' laughs with a dash of sentiment. Dave's innocence in the otherwise evil White House is truly refreshing and offers a glimmer of hope underneath its chuckling exterior. (M.V.)

■ **Dazed and Confused** Brilliant look at high school life, circa 1976. Director Richard Linklater, who has the best ear for teen dialogue this side of Cameron Crowe, places us so firmly into this world that we find ourselves caught up with every incident that takes place on the last day of school. Funny, poignant and oh so relatable — I know every character in this film. As the stoned out Slater, Rory Cochrane gives one of the year's funniest performances. (J.D.)

■ **Fearless** The most powerful role Jeff Bridges has ever undertaken, this film offers a new perspective on post-trauma experiences. The drama is intense

but not indulgent as Rosié Perez and Bridges piece their lives together after a plane crash. Gripping close-ups and emotional dialogue package the revealing character study. (M.V.)

■ **The Fugitive** Yeah, it's a chase flick, but it's still really good. Edge-of-your seat suspense overshadows the predictable ending as Harrison Ford runs away from the misinformed long arm of the law, saving lives along the way. The mutual respect between fugitive Ford and cop Tommy Lee Jones holds together an otherwise shaky feature-length premise. (M.V.)

■ **Man Bites Dog** The year's best foreign film is a dark sendup of documentary filmmaking. A novice film crew follows the exploits of a poetry-reciting, piano-playing serial killer who boxes on the side. As the killer, Benoit Poelvoorde emerges as a major star — a wacked-out cross between Robert DeNiro and James Woods. It's *Spinal Tap* crossed with *The Silence of the Lambs*, a blistering commentary on the infatuation we have with violence that is as dark as it is funny. (J.D.)

■ **Manhattan Murder Mystery** Yeeha! Woody Allen is back, and he brought his sense of humor with him. He stays away from the morbid sides of middle age and fulfills one of his cinematic dreams. It's straight-out silly and reunites Allen with former co-star and love interest Diane Keaton. Alan Alda and Anjelica Huston enter the scene to egg on Keaton's delusions and raise the kookiness factor. (M.V.)

■ **Menace II Society** Uncompromising film dealing with growing up amid the violence of South Central. An explosive directorial debut by the Hughes Brothers, who, with one swift stroke, easily squash the hopefulness of John Singleton's films. The triumph of the film is that we don't see the violent youths as heartless thugs but rather as average kids caught up in the guns and drugs around them. (J.D.)

■ **Schindler's List** Steven Spielberg's masterpiece hit me so hard on a gut emotional level that it left me speechless. The film follows the story of Oskar Schindler, a swarthy German industrialist who saved the lives of numerous Jews during the Holocaust. Unlike many of his earlier films that carried his trademark warmth, Spielberg unexpectedly hammers us with violent and disturbing images that bring home the horrors of the Nazis. Liam Neeson is wonderful as Schindler while Ralph Fiennes, portraying a vile Nazi officer, is the acting find of the year. (J.D.)

■ **Short Cuts** Director Robert Altman constructs a three hour-plus film that captures the chaotic nature of modern life in Los Angeles. In following the lives of more than 20 major characters, Altman returns to a structure reminiscent of his great mid-'70s work, *Nashville*. The great ensemble cast — including Lily Tomlin, Tim Robbins, Andie MacDowell, Tom Waits and Jack Lemmon — does wonders. A film, like life itself, that you treasure the more you reflect on it. (J.D.)

At Tatoo, salsa is more than a dip

By MELANIE COX
Collegian Arts Writer

Among plates of nachos, Latin rhythms straight out of *Beetlejuice* and bilingual men and women, Julie Lemmon is forgetting that her boyfriend yelled at her during dinner for making the broccoli wrong at home.

Instead of letting icky green veggies ruin her day, the 46-year-old Avon lady dissed the picky eater and went Latin dancing.

"I had a bad day and the music makes me happy," Lemmon said.

Lemmon learned how to lambada, meringue and salsa last month during Tatoo's Latin dancing nights and hasn't stopped talking about it. She swears Tuesday nights — when Tatoo has its Latin dancing night — are therapeutic.

Tatoo, 620 E. College Ave., began Latin night for over-21 crowds in October, offering traditional Latin American drinks, a Spanish buffet included in the cover charge and salsa lessons from 9 to 11 p.m. before the dancing starts.

Leslie Vasquez (graduate-agricultural education), who does the public relations for Latin night, said she became interested in Latin dancing after living in Venezuela. Vasquez said Tatoo agreed to the program because it helps erase the negative stereotype of Latin Americans. She sees Latin Ameri-

"The music is very tasty. I say tasty, I mean you are watching and you start getting the beat."

— Ramón Torres
instructor

can cultural experiences lacking in State College.

"There's Mexican restaurants but that's the only type of Latin American influence in the city of State College," Vasquez said.

Lemmon agreed she has learned a lot about other cultures through dancing, but added that she also likes the people she meets, including Ramón Torres, one of Tatoo's Latin dance instructors.

"Ramón is so easy to follow," she said. "If you never did this type of dancing before, you'll know it in no time."

Torres has been living in the United States since he moved here from Puerto Rico seven years ago. In addition to his position as the male instructor, Torres works as a full-time orderly at Centre Community Hospital.

He was the percussionist and the lead singer in two different meringue and salsa Puerto Rican orchestras. As if that weren't enough, he is also a bodybuilder who is working on a book of poetry about Puerto Rican culture.

Working alongside Torres is

Carina Giusti from Argentina, who has been Latin dancing for 10 years. Giusti (graduate-agricultural education) learned the meringue and salsa in Venezuela and the lambada in Brazil because there is no Latin dancing in Argentina.

Although Torres only gestures with his palm a few feet from the floor to demonstrate how long he has been dancing, both he and Giusti insist Latin dancing isn't that tall of an order.

"In America, they just get the feeling of how to move their feet," Giusti said, demonstrating her words with dance steps as she talks, "and by the end of the night, they have the feeling correct."

That feeling is what both newcomers and veterans alike say is the attraction behind Latin dancing.

"The music is very tasty," Torres said. "I say tasty, I mean you are watching and you start getting the beat."

The ease with which beginners pick up the steps is evident as Torres and Lemmon salsa on the



Collegian Photo/Sue Steele

Linda Gonzalez and instructor Ramón Torres trip the light fantastic to Latin beats. The two were dancing as part of the Tuesday Latin dance nights at Tatoo, 620 E. College Ave.

fairly crowded main stage of Tatoo. Among the already Latinesque decor of stools in hues of red and green, they begin slowly and patiently, but as they continue,

they dance with more ease, looking at each other and laughing.

For Lemmon, Latin dancing is just another way to escape the real world.

"I wish there were more days in the week to learn different types of dancing," she said. "A lot of people tell me I'm dancing my life away, but what a way to go."