RADIOHEART: The Drive & Times of DJ Kevin Cole

A film by Peter Hilgendorf

Producer contact
Rebecca Staffel
rstaffel@gmail.com

Technical information
Year: 2026
Country: USA
Runtime: 83 minutes
Format: 4K Digital, Color
Language: English
Documentary feature

Website
www.radioheartfilm.com

Trailer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKq9OHNtmBo
Download: https://f.io/YroO1FDj

Poster
Download: https://f.io/YroO1FDj

Stills
Download https://f.io/YroO1FDj

Logline
RADIOHEART: The Drive and Times of DJ Kevin Cole explores Kevin's deep passion for music and his unstoppable drive to share it. From Minneapolis' iconic club, First Avenue, to a nascent Amazon.com, to the global reach of Seattle's KEXP, Kevin discovers and amplifies independent voices, surfs rising tech waves — and humanizes them — while overcoming addiction and spreading love to a world needing healing.

Short logline
RADIOHEART explores DJ Kevin Cole's deep passion for music and his unstoppable drive to share it. Kevin discovers and amplifies independent voices, surfs rising tech waves — and humanizes them — while overcoming addiction and spreading love to a world needing healing.

Director's statement (Peter Hilgendorf)
This is a film about a guy obsessed with music. I feel it. I picture his force as radio waves. First, radiating from a turntable to a dance floor. Then, electrified on airwaves, across a city. Now, bristling through networks, around the planet.

That's Kevin Cole's blast radius. Not a destructive one — it's wild and inspiring; connecting and healing. This is not just a film about an incredible DJ. This is a film about Kevin's relentless energy for joining audience to art form and how that changed the culture of a legendary nightclub, multiple radio stations, created an internet phenomenon, and delivered the music millions would love.

I grew up in the land of Bob Dylan, The Replacements, Hüsker Dü, and Prince. I lived in Minneapolis during the heyday of First Avenue and REV105. Kevin Cole's name was on posters and in the papers. I was at Club Degenerate and Depth Probe. I listened to his Rock & Roll Wingding on the way to band practice. He was everywhere. I knew I needed to know this guy.

Back then, I was the webmaster at an alt-weekly — blending my love of the music scene with a bit of tech skill. And then it happened. Our paths crossed professionally. We were going to build something. Me and Kevin. Internet radio something. REV105 + HTML + independent media = ??? We were just starting to imagine...

Then the Telecommunications Act rolled in like a wrecking ball. Media consolidation killed both REV105 and our dream. We scattered. I headed to Seattle.

Nearly a year later, out of the blue, Kevin rang. Amazon was going to sell CDs on the internet and Kevin was tapped to help envision what that would look like. He called me. Was grunge still the scene ? Were there good record shops? Rock clubs? And a decent radio station? That call reconnected us.

In Seattle, I got to actually know him — not the mythical figure from Minneapolis, but the person. We shared a house for a few months. Kevin referred me to Amazon. It worked. We were finally building something together. There, I watched him do exactly what he'd always done: create authentic ways to connect people to music, resist mediocrity, defy corporate logic, and model positivity with his actions. Music drove it all.

Kevin walked away from what most people would call a dream job in tech when he was asked to help tiny KCMU realize their dream of a worldwide broadcast. Today that's KEXP — a massive and passionate global community of music lovers.

Then, in 2024, after half a century in music Kevin was stepping back from his full-time job at the mic. I started making a "retirement" video — a few clips, some photos, interviews with the people who hired him along the way. I thought I knew his story. But as I reviewed footage, as artists and colleagues spoke about what Kevin meant to them — and Kevin opened his box of journals — I realized this wasn't going to be a simple seven-minute tribute.

And so our crew got to work. This picture we've created is a portrait of an intentional life organized around a singular principle: sharing a love of music with the world. Our project grew to match the scope of that principle.

RADIOHEART is what I discovered in the making of it.

About Kevin Cole
Kevin Cole is KEXP's Senior Programming Advisor and Variety Mix DJ/Host. He led the programmatic vision for on-air, online, and in-person shows for 18 years as KEXP's Chief Content Officer/Senior Director of Programming. During Kevin's tenure, KEXP evolved from a Seattle-based radio station to a globally-revered nonprofit arts organization dedicated to enriching lives by championing and discovering new music.

Prior to joining KEXP, Kevin spent six years at Amazon.com as part of the team responsible for the strategy for the launch and ongoing development of Amazon's music store.

Previously, he helped build the iconoclastic station, Revolution Radio (REV 105) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, considered by many to be the last great commercial alternative radio station in America. While at Rev 105, Kevin produced and hosted syndicated radio shows that aired worldwide, including the Spin Radio Network. During the '80s, Kevin was a resident DJ at the First Avenue/7th Street Entry nightclub and had the honor of DJing for Prince at many of his private parties.

Production team bios
Director Peter Hilgendorf
A designer, musician, and filmmaker, Peter led UX, brand, and design teams at Amazon and Microsoft before founding Lake & Pine creative agency. Lake & Pine has produced videos for aerospace startups STOKE Space and Starfish Space, and music videos for Rhino Records.

Director and Editor Andrew Franks
Andrew is an award-winning commercial and documentary filmmaker based in Seattle. Most recently, he served as co-director and editor on ODESZA: The Last Goodbye Cinematic Experience, a feature that premiered in theaters worldwide.

Producer Rebecca Staffel
Based in Seattle, Rebecca is a multidisciplinarian whose career ranges from digital marketing for Amazon and Microsoft to personal development coaching to running an award-winning jam company. This is her first film production.

Executive Producer Mike McCready
Mike McCready is the lead guitarist for and one of the founding members of Pearl Jam. Additionally, McCready plays with friends in Flight to Mars, a UFO tribute band that hosts charity events for the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation's Camp Oasis program and the Jennifer Jaff Care Line. When not performing live, McCready scores TV and film projects.

Executive Producer Ashley O'Connor McCready
Ashley O'Connor McCready is an attorney in Washington state and the founding partner of Justitia Collective, LLC, a law firm specializing in post-conviction legal support and the decarceration of over-criminalized persons. She is the current board president of the Washington Innocence Project.

Executive Producer Susan Benson
Executive producer Susan Benson is an arts advocate, word wrangler, political activist, and fun and kindness fan. A former Bay area journalist, she worked for President Obama's White House, was

Amazon.com's first editor in chief, and was "mom" to Amazon's first and most famous dog, the late, beloved Rufus.

Executive Producer Jennifer Cast
Jennifer has spent her career building and scaling software and e-commerce businesses. As the 25th employee of Amazon, she founded and led Amazon's online music store and its physical bookstores. Jennifer focuses her volunteer activities on education, the arts, and LGBTQIA+ civil rights advocacy.

Credits
A Lake & Pine and 1251 Productions Film
In Association with Resonate Film, Sound-o-Matic, Hobby Creative Studio, Clearly Music

Directed by Peter Hilgendorf and Andrew Franks
Produced by Rebecca Staffel
Executive Producers Mike McCready, Ashley O'Connor McCready, Susan Benson, Jennifer Cast
Edited by Andrew Franks
Cinematography by Peter HIlgendorf, Andrew Franks, Ryan Cory
Music supervision by Michael Turner

Featuring interviews with Kevin Cole, Jessica Dobson, Kristin Hersh, Jimmy Jam, Peter Jesperson, Mary Lucia, Bob Mould, Eva Walker, John Richards, Cheryl Waters, Steve McClellan

Soundtrack features Moby, The Replacements, Throwing Muses, Cheryl Lynn, The B-52s, New Order, Deep Sea Diver, The Flaming Lips, Sigur Rós , Sugar, and more

Supported by Washington Filmworks, Northwest Film Forum, and more than 225 donors.