



DJ Freddy Cruz is celebrating 10 years at Houston's 104.1 KRBE this year. He started his career in radio while he finished his bachelor's degree at Bauer College in 2001.



RUN THE WORLD

**Bauer
Alumnus
Connects
with Listeners
as On-Air DJ
for 104.1 KRBE**

Story by Jessica Navarro, Photos by Nicki Evans

BAUER

College alumnus Freddy Cruz may not seem to have much in common with the classmates who graduated with him in 2001.

Instead of a suit and tie, he wears Converse and jeans to work. And in place of a desk in a corner office, he does his work behind a sound board and a microphone.

But as an on-air personality and image director for 104.1 KRBE in Houston, Cruz is at heart a businessman who sees his listeners as customers.

This year, he's celebrating 10 years at the station and a radio career of nearly two decades. At the start of his first job in radio in the late 90s, he pursued an undergraduate degree in radio/TV/film but quickly realized that a business degree would give him a broader knowledge base.

"At the time, I had an internship at a radio station, handing out bumper stickers and working for free, as most interns do, and the DJ told me, 'Hey, you already have a job in radio. If you want to run the world, go to business school.'"

"Run the world" might have been a broad goal, but since graduating from Bauer with a BBA in marketing, Cruz has found significant success professionally and personally.

He's gone from an unpaid internship in radio to being one of Houston's most recognizable on-air talents and the man behind the scenes who produces promos and commercials for KRBE and two sister stations, WABD in Mobile, AL and The Vibe in Kansas City, KS.

"I love everything about what I do," he said. "Sometimes I wake up in the morning and know exactly what I want to share with my listeners that day, and I'm so excited. That's when I have to tell myself, 'Slow down, you have to get out of bed and get ready, bro.'"

Although his show starts at 10 a.m., Cruz arrives to the KRBE studios in the Westchase district a couple

hours early to prepare content for the 15 or so "breaks" in-between songs and commercials, when he gets to talk to listeners. He employs a marketer's sensibility when he decides what and how he wants to communicate to his audience.

"I've got to make sure that each break counts," Cruz said. "Am I informing my listener? Am I entertaining my listener? Am I interacting with my listener? Am I doing all three? I make sure all the breaks are doing something to engage with my audience and delivering the best content I possibly can."

Listeners have come to love Cruz's brand of talk. He is a familiar and friendly voice, giving the feeling that he's chatting with friends, asking about their workday and families, mixed with snippets of conversation about food ("especially if it's deep-fried or has a lot of cheese stuffed in it," he said), football and celebrities. And, the Revolutionary Era buff can sometimes sneak in a factoid or two about his favorite period of history.

After his show finishes at 1 p.m., he takes a quick coffee break and then heads into his production studio to begin his imaging duties, writing and recording commercials to promote the three stations.

His workdays don't end there. In the evenings, after helping his daughters with homework and eating dinner with his family, Cruz often wraps up projects in his home studio.

"It really helps with the balance," he said. "I set hard hours so I can pick the kids up from school on time, and then I can finish everything that needs to get done later in the day."

Cruz applied a similar approach during his days as a business student, when he was also working full-time at KRBE, covering the Sunday-into-Monday overnight on-air schedule and answering phones during the day. He ambitiously registered for 12 hours of marketing and management classes, including one on Mondays and Wednesdays that started at 8:30 a.m.

"So, I worked midnight to 5:30 a.m., slept for about an hour and a half, and then I went straight to class," he said. "After that, I'd sleep for two hours and then go back to KRBE to answer phones from 2-6 p.m."

Despite the frantic pace, Cruz excelled in his classes that semester while paying his dues in the radio business. And, later in his collegiate career, he met his now-wife, Monica, in an accounting class.

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**Bauer alumnus
Freddy Cruz
is applying his
business skills
to a successful
radio career.**



“The best thing about accounting for me was meeting my wife,” Cruz said. “I sat on the opposite side of the auditorium from her, and it took me two-and-a-half weeks to muster up enough courage to talk to her.”

They married in 2001, which proved to be a memorable year for Cruz in many ways — he graduated from Bauer and made plans to move to Minneapolis the following year to take a full-time imaging director position at a station there.

“I was there exactly three years, and then I came back to Houston because I couldn’t get enough KRBE,” Cruz said.

He’s been in his current role at KRBE since 2005, and although working in radio presents the opportunity to meet musicians and celebrities, he says that isn’t what keeps him in the business.

“Do I meet a lot of famous people? Yes. Do I meet a lot of famous people and party with them at late night raves every night? No. But, I can say this — every day at KRBE is different. I love this job with all my heart,” Cruz said.

He added: “Meeting artists and celebrities is cool, but it’s not the coolest part of the gig. I really like hanging out with Houstonians. I get so excited to share really cool stuff with my listeners.”

For Cruz, life is a constant loop of learning and teaching, which he gets to cultivate at work with his audience and at home with his family.

“Never stop learning,” he said. “When school’s over, it’s not really over. You’re not technically walking in to Bauer College after you get your diploma, but the world is going to change with or without you. Learning has never been easier and knowledge is literally in the palm our hands!”

The best way to keep up, according to Cruz, is old fashioned hard work.

“Always outwork everyone,” he said. “That doesn’t necessarily mean that you should work 90-hours a week immediately, but always remember that there is always someone trying to outwork you. And always volunteer to do the things that nobody else wants to do. Then do those things as if your career depended on them.”

On Another Note



Freddy the Foodie

“My favorite thing about Houston is my favorite thing, period — food. You could spend five years eating at a new restaurant every day and still not hit up all of the awesome joints in town.” The native Houstonian gives us his top five picks for good eats in town.

1

BERNIE'S
BURGER BUS



2 Eatsie Boys

3 Pronto Cucinino

4 La Finca Mexican
Restaurant

5 Qin Dynasty