

## COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

---

# Clear 99 host Scotty Cox scores national awards

By [Chelsea Bengier](#)

September 24, 2012 | 12:00 p.m. CDT



Radio personality Scotty Cox banter with co-host Cara Denis between songs during their show on Aug. 30. Cox, who won two CMA's in 2011, has been nominated for three Marconi awards for his show "Scotty and Cara in the Morning." | [Kile Brewer](#)



Scotty Cox and Cara Denis talk about topics for discussion while playing a song on their show "Scotty and Cara in the Morning." The show has been nominated for the Marconi Award for Small Market Personality of the Year, along with KCLR's other nominations for Small Market Station of the Year and Country Station of the Year. | [Kile Brewer](#)

Scotty Cox and Cara Denis host "Scotty and Cara in the Morning" for the Clear 99 radio station. The show has been honored with a national award nomination for best small market radio personality team. ; [Kile Brewer](#)

COLUMBIA — Long tables covered with radio equipment separate Scott "Scotty" Cox and co-host Cara Denis from their seats at the Clear 99 country station, but they chat as if nothing is between them.

Their relationship is relatively new, but their banter is easy.

"I'm from Indiana," Denis says proudly. "It's too beautiful."

Cox, who was born and raised in Missouri, looks up and chuckles. "It's one beautiful, not two beautiful."

Denis glares at him, "It's three beautiful! Actually, it's 17 beautiful!"

Cox grins and says sarcastically, "No, it can't be, it's Indiana for Christ's sake!"

## **Award-winning hosts on Clear 99**

Cox and Denis are co-hosts of "Scotty & Cara in the Morning" that airs weekdays from 5:30 to 10 a.m. It's prime time for listeners who tune in to hear their lighthearted commentary.

As the veteran, Cox, 45, leads the way — and his droll humor is a big reason why he continues to win both regional and national awards for the radio broadcasts.

Last month, he was nominated for a Marconi Award as "small market personality of the year." In 2011, he took home an award from the Country Music Association, once again as "small market personality of the year."

In March, he earned a "favorite radio personality/team title" in Inside Columbia magazine's Best of Columbia 2012 contest.

Cox has worked for the Zimmer Radio Group for 24 years, 12 of them with Clear 99.

"It's something I feel particularly gifted to do," Cox said. "I'm a believer that God gifts us all for certain things, and I think this is just one thread in my wheelhouse. Connecting with people is just something that I seem to be able to do."

The station's quirky environment helps cultivate his on-air personality.

"The whole Zimmer Radio Group is just a part of that big puzzle," Cox said. "It's a great place to work, and we're very lucky to have management that encourages that."

For Teresa Davis, the program director at Clear 99, Cox has been a consistent voice at Zimmer Radio Group.

"He enjoys waking up the people in mid-Missouri, and I know they enjoy listening to him every morning," Davis said. "It's become a constant for them — cup of coffee and Scotty."

Cox's charming attitude has not been lost on Davis, who has worked with him for more than 10 years.

"He's a big ole' teddy bear," Davis said. "Usually when he says something, it's funny and profound."

## **Atmosphere of chatter and charm**

In the studio, he and Denis talk across rows of colorful knobs and buttons as if they were having a chummy conversation in a coffee shop.

Except it's 6 a.m., the sun is casting an orange glow on the wall, and they are live on radio, wearing big headphones snugly around their heads.

When Cox steps out to take a break, he commands Denis to hold down the fort. She speaks a few segments on her own before he returns with his sarcastic wit.

"You've done well." Cox says into the microphone. "I think the ratings went up in that five-minute span."

Denis rolls her eyes and laughs. "Oh, please."

### **Seinfeld as comedic inspiration**

Denis teases Cox about the title of his fantasy football team, "The Rabid AntiDentites."

"It's 7:17 and Cara is laughing at my fantasy football team name," Cox announces to Clear 99 listeners before pressing a button to play the "Seinfeld" clip that inspired the name.

Cox says Jerry Seinfeld, among other comics, influenced his view of comedy and encouraged him to write and perform stand-up.

"I could watch it ('Seinfeld') 24 hours a day," Cox says with a smile. "After the show was over, he wanted to get back to stand-up so he didn't lose that edge. That started my infatuation with him."

Three or four years ago, Cox performed at Déjà Vu, a Columbia comedy club, on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Part of the fun was the challenge of writing the material.

"Seinfeld does the same thing as I've done with comics at Déjà Vu. It's just three guys around a table spitting ideas off each other," Cox said.

Some of his bits involve traveling, relationships and his mother. He bites his lip and laughs, as he says: "She's a pretty big force in my life."

A little black cross hangs from a dark leather necklace between the buttons of his shirt. He was raised as a Baptist, and both his parents worked as Sunday school teachers. They were pillars of the church, he said.

“I called my parents Baptist Bob and Betty because they were like characters. They were so Baptist,” Cox says.

### **Sister Joan becomes catalyst for humor**

When his mother began teaching at a Catholic high school, a new comedic force entered Cox’s life, in the form of Sister Joan.

“Sister Joan was hilarious. She could’ve done stand up,” Cox said. “She nicknamed mom the ‘token Baptist’ and would yell stuff in the hallways like, ‘Hey Cox, what’s it like to wake up every morning and know you’re wrong?’”

He used some of his childhood memories in his comedy; for instance, the first moment he encountered a Catholic nun.

“My mom invited nuns over, and when the doorbell rang there were two women there in normal clothes, and I remember looking at them like, ‘where the nuns at?’” Cox laughs.

Unlike popular comedians such as Will Ferrell and Melissa McCarthy, Cox’s motto was to avoid crossing any lines.

“Seinfeld kept it clean – I just want to be funny, and he tries to do the same,” Cox said.

### **Keeping it suitable for families**

This philosophy also applies to his radio show on Clear 99. Cox and his co-workers aim to keep the comedy appropriate for all ages.

“There are kids in the car and I don’t want them to stop listening, but we don’t want to be Disney either. I try to avoid saying something that would put the parent in an awkward situation,” Cox said.

Cox hums to Zac Brown Band lyrics playing through the speakers in the corner of the studio.

“I love live music. I sang in (D. Rowe’s) once just to open for a friend,” Cox said. “I like singing. It’s a rush. Most radio guys are jealous of rocking bands.”

Despite his outgoing, social attitude, Cox has a laid-back, humble side, too.

“There are guys and girls everywhere who do what I do. Getting an award feels weird, but when your

hometown can connect to it, you feel a sort of pride,” Cox said.

His CMA award sits in a glass trophy on the wall of D. Rowe’s. Instead of keeping it shelved in his living room, Cox loaned it to owner David Rowe to add to his Mizzou memorabilia so people could see it.

To Cox, the best award is not a glass trophy with his name engraved on a little gold plaque or a Marconi nomination. A simple autograph for a child would do.

“The first time I was ever asked for an autograph was by a little 8-year-old boy. I looked up at his mom and asked ‘Why would you want my autograph? It doesn’t mean anything.’ And she looked at me and replied, ‘It means something to him,’” Cox said.

“That’s what it’s all about – that connection with people.”