



“ Like my mother always said, ‘Do something you love, and you’ll never work a day in your life.’ ”

Although he initially had aspirations of being a professional athlete, and later got a law degree, Terry Bello followed his true dream of making it big in radio, going on to become *Billboard*'s Music Director of the Year in 2006. His career has taken him all around the U.S. to major cities like Philadelphia, New York, and Atlanta, where he worked with a young Ryan Seacrest. “I have pictures of Ryan when his hair was really blonde,” Terry said. “But seriously, I’m very proud of him.” Today, Terry is known as “the voice of soul,” hosting a nationally syndicated show called Soul Lounge and being the creator/executive producer of the International Soul Music Summit. While on a well-deserved break, Terry gave us the scoop on why he’s “a major winner in the game.”

Terry Bello

Radio Personality and Host

What turned you on to a career in radio?

When I was six years old, my mom got one of her radio friends to say my name on the air, and I liked that so much. Later, my mom ended up working at a radio station in Birmingham, AL, and I actually was on the air as a part-time DJ when I was 15 years old. I had a show once a week for two hours on a Saturday, and that’s how the bug started.

What did you do in college?

I got a scholarship to play basketball at Morehouse College and I worked at the local radio station. I then transferred to NYU and worked at their radio station. I also interned at CD 101.9, where, at 19, I became the second-youngest radio personality in New York City history. From there, I got a full-time gig in Atlantic City, NJ. They called me the “Bus Jock,” because I’d commute from New York to Atlantic City every day.

Tell us more about Soul Lounge.

It’s a two-hour weekly specialty show that’s heard in 43 markets around the country and parts of Africa and Europe. It caters to neo-soul music, with the likes of Marvin Gaye, Jill Scott, and Maxwell. It’s been going strong now for seven years.

What are the main responsibilities of being on the air?

You just don’t get on the air and talk all smooth and sexy. You’re a public figure and people trust you to give them information and

entertain them. You need very good communication skills to interview artists. If your ratings aren’t good, you can get fired. So there’s a lot of pressure. You also have to be mindful of where you are. When I was on the air in Dallas, they didn’t care what Atlanta was doing, and Atlanta didn’t care what New York was doing. Each city has its own vibe.

What do you think makes you good at what you do?

I love it. And I know that’s the typical answer, but like my mother always said, “Do something you love, and you’ll never work a day in your life.” So, I really don’t consider it work. And that love has pushed me to do other things: commercial radio pushed me to do syndication, which propelled me to do things like compilation CDs. My biggest accomplishment is the International Soul Music Summit. But at the tender age of 37, I still have a lot of radio left in me. I’m very fortunate. I take nothing for granted.

What advice do you have for someone interested in a career in radio?

The best way to learn is to be around the business. Get an internship. You’ll have to pay your dues by starting in a small market and working your way up, but if you find yourself loving it, don’t turn back. I’ve gone from being a survivor to a major winner in the game. Being the best for me is giving everything I’ve got.

—VERONICA DOMINGUEZ-GARCIA



Want to check out other musical careers? Go to www.mymusicalive.com/coolcareers