

WPR: BETA - WPR's new weekend program debuts April 7

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Because The First Five Days After The Weekend Are The Hardest

Madison, Wis. – After two successful pilots, BETA lands on WPR's weekend schedule beginning April 7. According to host and producer Doug Gordon, BETA takes an immersive, innovative, playful and provocative approach to exploring arts, culture and technology. "I think there's a lot more room for playfulness and irreverence on public radio," says Gordon. "Coming out of the gate, BETA's first episode fuels that feeling of fun and curiosity, which are the main ingredients of the BETA formula."

Gordon is not new to WPR. "Doug has always been an innovating producer, responsible for several popular segments on WPR's Peabody award-winning national program To The Best Of Our Knowledge," said Adam Friedrich, Executive Producer of BETA. "His putting of each idea he produces through a playful prism results in a completely original piece of radio."

BETA is the first program to begin full production from WPR Next, WPR's content innovation hub. Led by Friedrich, WPR Next explores new concepts and ideas to create the next generation of WPR programs. "Doug has that rare ability to make his enthusiasm for radio production so contagious that you'll keep listening no matter the topic," Friedrich said. "As a fellow producer, its envy inducing, but as a listener, it's absolutely delightful."

In its premiere episode, BETA takes listeners into the life and brain of legendary radio artist Joe Frank. Gordon and filmmaker Dave Carlson explore Frank's mind-

bending blend of sound, music and storytelling through Carlson's documentary Joe Frank: Somewhere Out There. "Joe Frank is why many of us got into radio in the first place. I couldn't think of a better way to open BETA," Gordon said.

"In the afterlife, we'll be free from static cling," sings Amy Denio in Rx for the Afterlife. In its second segment, BETA catches up with Denio, one of the most prolific and unclassifiable women making music today. A self-taught multi-instrumentalist, multi-linguist, composer and producer, her music recognizes no genre boundaries. Yes, Gordon does pose the question, "Do you believe in the afterlife?" Like her music, her answer is quite unexpected.

BETA's debut finishes with an unconventional look at the landmark TV series Breaking Bad. Gordon discovers how the folk-music genre narcocorrido (drug smuggler ballad) delivers a new perspective on the show and maybe even questions our assumptions of its protagonist. "These odd, but addicting turns are exactly what we can expect from Doug and BETA," said WPR Chief Operating Officer Mike Arnold. "It's a fun hour of radio designed for the weekends."

Hear BETA Saturdays at 9:00 a.m. on the NPR News & Classical Music Network and at 11 a.m. on The Ideas Network beginning April 7. You can also hear the pilots and new episodes at wpr.org/beta.