



◀ Dr. Williamson with reps from Alcon, Glaukos, and Johnson & Johnson Vision. You can stream Dr. Williamson's show nationwide every Wednesday from 6 to 7 pm CST at www.why.org.

ZULU DOC AND HIS *GUT BUCKET MUSIC*

A lifelong love of music has led to a popular radio show.

BY BLAKE K. WILLIAMSON, MD, MPH, MS | WILLIAMSON EYE CENTER, LOUISIANA

Music has always been my biggest hobby. In college, I started on the recording side. I earned extra money making CDs for bands by recording their live concerts with field microphones feeding straight to digital audio tape. I'd then prepare the tapes for distribution so that the bands could get more gigs.

I've also been a collector of audiophile sound systems and vinyl LPs since I was a teenager. The music I love is the traditional kind that stems from where I've lived. Growing up near New Orleans, jazz and folk aren't genres, they're religions. Being near the Mississippi Delta during college, I was surrounded by blues and gospel as well. These styles are unequivocally American and are the roots of our modern music, collectively representing what I call *gut bucket music*.

My first job as a live radio DJ came during my residency training at Tulane, where I served as the sidekick on a pre-World War II jazz program that

aired Saturday mornings on WWOZ 90.7 FM. The host was Big Pete (Peter Kastl, MD), whose day job was serving as my cornea attending. He called me *Zulu Doc* because of my affiliation with the Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club during Mardi Gras, and that handle has stuck to this day.

Once I graduated and moved on to Williamson Eye, I auditioned for a spot on our local community station, WHYR 96.9 FM. I've been broadcasting live from downtown Baton Rouge every Wednesday night ever since.

My show is called *High Cotton and Hill Country*, and it focuses on pre-1975 country, blues, gospel, and folk. Each show has a theme and includes plenty of dialogue with my cohost about the artists, kind of like a National Public Radio documentary. The show is fun to do, but it also has a therapeutic effect for me, and it is a welcome outlet on Wednesday evenings after a full day of surgery. I think it's healthy for busy surgeons to have an outlet, and I like doing something creative and

artistic with my time that gives back to the community.

The show has really taken off. My cohost and I have built a dedicated fan base, with people streaming the show from as far away as the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates. Since we launched our show, it has become one of the most popular programs at the station, with more streams than any other show. When surgeons come for site visits or reps and industry colleagues visit Williamson Eye, they often choose Wednesday so they can visit the studio at night and cohost with me, providing something different and fun to do while they are on the road.

Like mathematics, music is a universal language, and radio is the original medium that spoke to us all. In the internet age, when art and content have become less and less tangible, I'm proud to be a card-carrying millennial going against the grain and doing things the old-fashioned way. Zulu Doc, signing off. ■